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# WIZARD

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THE COMICS MAGAZINE • 142

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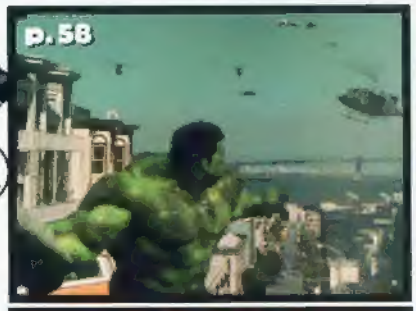


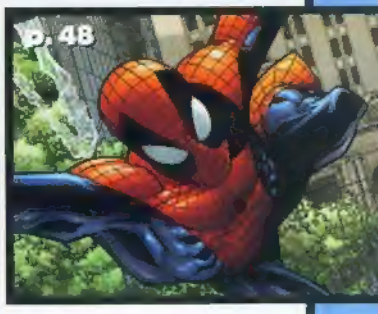


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Your inside source for the summer's biggest events and more than 100 of the hottest titles! **By the *Wizard* Staff**

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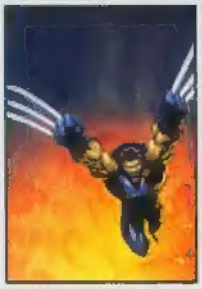

The **Ultimate Wolverine** cover (**left**) was drawn by David Finch and Art Thibert. For details on the biggest events hitting this summer, like Brian Michael Bendis writing *Ultimate X-Men*, head over to **page 86**! The **Spectacular Spider-Man** cover (**right**) was drawn by Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher. For a seven-page preview of the new ongoing Spider-title, swing over to **page 48**!

Hulk photo: Universal

# STANDARDS


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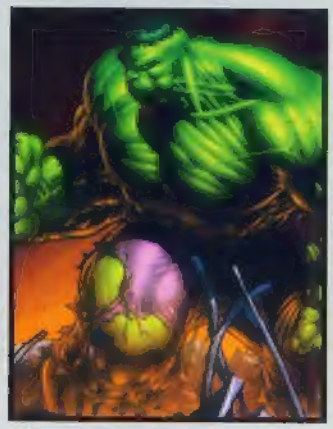
COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

# EXCLUSIVE OFFER

## INCREDIBLE COLLECTIBLES



Just in time for the June 20 release of Universal and Marvel Studios' "Hulk" movie, Dynamic Forces and Wizard Entertainment combine their might to offer you a host of jaw-dropping Hulk collectibles. To ride the gamma merchandise wave, surf over to **page 32.**

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

# FROM THE TOP

## WIZARD'S GREEN THUMB

After seeing all our amazing "Hulk" movie coverage, you'll be feeling green around the gills!

It's our Official Hulk Movie Issue this month, and we've got a host of awesome Hulk-centric features for you. First up is Hulk Smashes: The Top Must-Have Hulk Comics of All Time feature on **page 66**. But that's not all for Hulk comics; check out our Price Guide starting on **page 148** for the most expensive and sought-after Hulk issues available now. As for the "Hulk" movie, you'll be blown away by our visit to the ILM (Industrial Light and Magic) Studios, the special effects creators behind "Hulk," on **page 58**. And if that's still not enough, flip over to **page 32** for a look at a bundle of Hulk collectibles coming from Dynamic Forces.

We've also got two mind-blowing previews this month: a sneak-peek at the brand-new Spider-title, *Spectacular Spider-Man*, by Paul Jenkins and Humberto Ramos on **page 48**, as well as the first look at *Superman/Batman* courtesy of Jeph Loeb and Ed McGuinness on **page 34**. You can also find out how to get a job in comics with our How to Pitch to Epic feature on **page 30**; learn the ups and downs of one of comics' most controversial creators, Jim Shooter, on **page 78**; get the scoop on all your favorite comic titles with our massive, 30-page Summer Preview on **page 86**!

This will be one of the hottest summers ever, and we're right in the mix of all the biggest events...including the countdown to the top-secret *Wizard* #0!

Sincerely,

Gareb Shamus

*PS—Don't forget to check out the 2003 MTV Movie Awards on Thursday, June 5 starting at 9 p.m.! This year's edition has a superhero theme, so expect plenty of heroic parodies and skits! And I'll be there too, sitting right next to Jennifer Lopez...*

## BY THE NUMBERS

*Statistics compiled when we put this bad boy together*

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of staff members who has mono this month | 1* |
| Number of staff members who really thought it was SARS | 17 |
| Number of days early Staff Writer Mike Cotton saw "X2" | 21 |
| Number of times Cotton acted out Wolverine's berserker rage | 127 |
| Number of new staffers hired since January 2003 | 3 |
| Number of car accidents the newbies have been in since being hired | 5 |
| Number of special projects worked on by the Wizard staff in April, besides this issue | 4** |
| Number of staff members who received a "Magneto" chess set from 20th Century Fox | 2*** |
| Number of "polish the bishop" jokes the two staffers were forced to endure | 429 |
| Total number of books covered in our 2003 Summer Preview | 155 |
| Number of proposed Epic pitches thought up by staffers (including revivals of Darkhawk, Dakota North, Captain Universe, Patsy Walker and Mondark Moonstalker) | 23 |
| Number of Hulk comics read by four staffers over a five-day span for consideration in the "Hulk Smashes" feature | 346 |

*Editorial Director Matt Senreich; he's got cooties! ** Hulk #1 ACE, Alex Ross Updated and Expanded Millennium Edition, Big Book of Wizard Covers and Wizard World East Convention Program ***Mike Cotton (pictured) and Senreich; too bad neither of 'em knows how to play!

IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERRE!!

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**STAFF SKIN TONE THIS TIME OF YEAR** *Pasty, leaning toward downright translucent*

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**ULTIMATE WOLVERINE** *by David Finch, Art Thibert and Studio F*

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# MAGIC WORDS

## WIZARD'S BEST COVERS... MARK MILLAR'S FETISHES... ...AND FUN NAKED STUFF!

**What can I say? The Amalgamated Geeks of America battle on about "Ultimate Marvel" (see "Quick Hits"), and this is my, geez...next-to-last column. Where did all the time go? Probably to encouraging the next generation of writers and artists...**

### Dear Jim,

I'm not sure if you remember me or not. Several years ago I sent you a comic proposal for a book called *The Austin Avenger*. It was a book about a high-school kid who becomes a hero in his own school halls.

You responded to me very positively, and even took the time to scribble a little note and send it back to me. You had said that you were going to send it over to Awesome Entertainment (yes, this was several years ago) and wished me the best.

That letter was one of my inspirations to stick it out in this great business. Now, years later, my first book was actually published as part of Free Comic Book Day. It's called *Big Bad*.

I hope you picked up a copy of the book on Free Comic Book Day. And thanks for being a positive light in this comic book hopeful's dark tunnel. Peace and God Bless.

**Michael Duron**
**madhart@aol.com**

***Big Bad* is a nifty-keen "after the happily ever after" take on fairy tales, and it even sports a spiffy Little Red Riding Hood cover by va-va-voom painter Joe Chido. Check it out. And I was happy to help, if indeed help I did.**

### Hey J-Mc,

You're the top dog at Top Cow? My goodness! A great company has been left in the hands of an alcoholic zombie!

Anyway, here are my 10 favorite *Wizard* covers of all time:

10) *Wizard* #56, Wolverine by Bart Sears. Logan's rage + splattered entrails = killer cover!

9) *Wizard* #83, Astro City by Alex Ross. A cover classic.

8) *Wizard* #117, Ghost Rider by Trent Kaniuga. The amazing detail brings this morbid bad boy to life.

7) *Wizard* #64, Angela by Joseph Michael Linsner. JML shows everyone who's boss when it comes to the female form.

6) *Wizard* #129, Jean Grey and Emma Frost by Adam Hughes. Jean's touching Emma's nipple! Very arousing!

5) *Wizard* #80, Wolverine/Hulk by Leinil Yu. These two Marvel heavyweights in combat are a joy to look at.

4) *Wizard* #131, Truth by Joe Quesada. Downright scary!

3) *Wizard* #75, JLA by Alex Ross. Hail the kings of the DC Universe!

2) *Wizard* #121, Daredevil/Green Arrow by Joe Quesada. I cried like a schoolgirl when I saw this piece!

1) *Wizard* #134, Captain America by John Cassaday. Simple, yet dramatic. The greatest *Wizard* cover ever.

**Reggie Manlungat**
**Paranaque City, Philippines**

**Ah, memories. Stroll with me down that lane, if you will. The *Wizard* #83 cover was, at the time, a bit of a stretch for us. Astro City wasn't exactly Batman or Wolverine in terms of instant recognition...and by extrapolation, instant sales in terms of a cover. After much internal**

# BUNNY AWARD

**Dear Jim,**

Do you think it would be possible anytime soon to interview Frank Cho? He's one of the best artists in the business!

**Celina Hernandez**
**Cicero, IL**

**Okay. Howzabout...now!**
**(phone's ringing)**
**Cho: Hello?**
**McLauchlin: Cho, it's McLauchlin. Gotta ask you some questions for "Magic Words," like, fast-time!**
**Cho: Okay.**
**McLauchlin: So, did you go to art school?**
**Cho: No. I went to the University of Maryland Nursing School. I have a bachelor's degree in Nursing.**
**McLauchlin: No kiddin'. So whatchoo learn there?**
**Cho: When wiping ass, you go with the grain.**
**McLauchlin: Amazing. That's what they taught me in shop class, too.**
**Cho: Hey, from your shop teacher's mouth to God's ear and my patient's ass.**
**McLauchlin: So how's progress on your Marvel *Shanna the She-Devil* series?**
**Cho: It's going fine. Issue #1 is complete, and I'm almost done with #2. It's an eight-issue series, and I told Marvel not to release it until I have seven issues in the can, so it'll be monthly. There's lots of fun fighting and naked stuff.**
**McLauchlin: And what's your dream project?**
**Cho: To illustrate the King Kong novel. I'd do like 20 oil paintings and 100 black-and-white illustrations for it.**
**McLauchlin: You're a brush guy when it comes to inking your work, right?**
**Cho: No, I use Pigma Micron pens, size 08 and 02.**
**McLauchlin: Cool, man. Gotta go. Thanks!**
**Cho: Wait! I get paid for this, right?**

**wrangling, we fell back on the "Alex Ross wants to do it, so we'll let him" argument. That's usually a good argument.**

**Dangerous Danny Miki, who poured heart, soul and massive blacks into inking Trent Kaniuga's *Wizard* #117 masterpiece, actually handed this cover off to me one day at the Golden Apple comic store in L.A. If you think it's impressive in print—and it is—you should see the original live and in person. It's actually not just one full page in size. It's a page-and-a-half. Massive. Cool. It blew me away.**

***JML's Wizard #64?* It ran with a black background, but Linsner actually painted it with a blue-green background. The original was purchased by big Angela fan and CrossGen Entertainment founder Mark Alessi. It's currently hanging on a wall in the CrossGen office.**

**And *Wizard #75?* Alex's original layout called for Superman, Wonder Woman and the Martian Manhunter to be featured most prominently. We had Alex swap MM for Batman, as, well, Batman is Batman. But I still keep a copy of the original design in my desk drawer to this day.**

**And yes, gentle reader, you can find out all this and more in the *Wizard Big Covers Book* (*ahem*) on sale this very month.**

**Dear *Wizard*,**

1) In your "Guide to Getting a Job in Comics," why are there three major schools for artists to attend, but none for writers?

2) In *Wizard* #138, you ran an interview with Jeph Loeb. He stated that he can't make a living writing in comics. He also said that Brian Michael Bendis is not in the comic writing field for the money. Just how much is an average comic writer's salary, anyway?

**Joe Quesada**
**Editor-in-Chief, Marvel Comics**

**1) Because there are really about 53,000 schools for writers. Pretty much every college on Earth has creative writing classes, and most offer majors in that area. True, there's no major offered specific to comic writing, but then again, there's no major offered specific to greeting card writing, either. Take Creative Writing. Take Journalism. And if you can, take Philosophy of Sex and Love. Damn, I loved that class.**

**2) Ah, the great unanswerable question. It's like this:**

**There are publishing deals out there where writers will literally toil for no money up front and only get a percentage of sales. If a book**

# HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Like a title? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite comic company and let 'em know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, but be sure to send your letters in care of a particular book or editor. Power to the people!

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doesn't sell all too well, that percentage can amount to about $100. Think about it—at 22 pages the book, that's less than $5 a page.

Then again, well-established writers can easily make $200 a page or more up front, plus royalties on the back end. But you usually have to spend years slogging your way up through the ranks to achieve that level.

And what does Mr. Loeb say? "To clarify, I meant that Brian Michael Bendis writes comics for love," he answers. "He doesn't do it for the money. He could write movies, television, phone books—but he *chooses* to write comics. When the boom fell out of the market, the people who shouldn't have been writing comics in the first place left when the money left. Now, we've got folks who love comics writing comics and it makes the entire business lift itself up."

Loeb admits he's puzzled as to an "average" writers' salary as well. "I don't know," he says. "But I hear that Bill Jemas pays himself a million dollars an issue. Now *he* can afford to write comics!"

And I think Bendis gets half Jemas' rate.

### Dear Jim,

Why was Mark Millar wearing a bra in a picture in one of your previous issues? Was it a prank of some kind? Or a bizarre fetish?

**Mack McClurkan**
**Dickson, TN**

My theory: The British are just weird. Millar pleads plausible deniability.

"What are you talking about? I was wearing a lumberjack shirt, jeans and one of those manly Canadian hats they wear in the winter. You obviously just have an active imagination," he claims.

Actually, the truth is far more tragic. Take it from Mark Millar, kids: "Don't use steroids."

### Dear Jim,

We are writing to you out of concern for Mark Millar. Now, we know Mark is a dear, dear friend of *Wizard*, and as such, we would like to bring to his attention the folly of his ways. What could Mark Millar, nubile young British comic-writer extraordinaire, do wrong, you say? One word: "meatball."

Mr. Millar seems to think "meatball" is some sort of popular, contemporary American slang. For example, in *Ultimate X-Men* #30, Cyclops tells Magneto that he "Thought wrong, meatball." Later in that same issue, Wolverine tells Sabretooth, "Well, let's see how long this takes to grow back, meatball." Further, in *The Ultimates* #5, Captain America tells Hulk, "She's in the air, meatball." Keep in mind that in our research we were unable to find a single instance of his use of the word "meatball" outside of the Ultimate universe.

We were even good enough to uncover the source of his error, so Millar can hop into his time machine (all British people have time machines) and go back in time to stop the Mark Millar of the past

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# QUICK HITS

THE READERS STRIKE BACK!

I think "Daredevil" is the best superhero movie so far! When's the sequel?

**—Richie Lanning, Glendora, CA**

About Marvel's Ultimate books…how can you abandon 40+ years of one continuous storyline? I shudder to think.

**—Alexandra Mason, West Orange, NJ**

If you don't like the Ultimate Marvel universe, shut your mouth. If you have a problem with this incredible project, just don't buy it.

**—PFC Ryan J. Becker, USMC, Camp Pendleton, CA**

*Ultimate War?* Ultimate shameless marketing ploy. I'm a fan of the Ultimate titles, but this series went nowhere.

**—Jason Gauthier, Vancouver, BC, Canada**

The "Superman" movie is the new "Spider-Man" movie–a mirage on the horizon. I look forward to seeing it in about 20 years.

**—Christopher Brizzi, Petaluma, CA**

The recent explosion of comic book movies has me going back and re-reading my old *Daredevil*, *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* comics. It's helped me remember why I love comics so much in the first place!

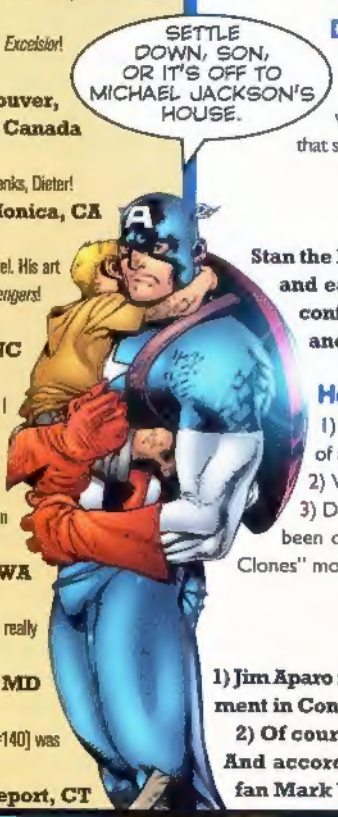
**—Jonathan Muckala, jmuckala@css.edu**

Congrats to Greg Horn on his stellar *Wizard* #140 "X2" movie cover. This guy does incredible likenesses of the actors!

**—Bruce Taylor, Saginaw, MI**

I just had the privilege of reading Stan Lee's "bio-autography" *Excelsior!* An incredible read. What a great man!

**—Dieter Friesen, Vancouver, BC, Canada**




Hey, look at that! After all these years, I finally found a fan! Thanks, Dieter!

**—Stan Lee, Santa Monica, CA**

Thanks for finally recognizing the great talents of Olivier Copiel. His art has always been amazing, and he'll soar to new heights on *Avengers!* **[at right]**

**—Marco Weeks, Bradford, NC**

Your "April Fool's Gold" [*Wizard* #140] was a laugh riot. God, I had forgotten all about *U.S. 1!*

**—Luke Knight, Dallas, TX**

By Crom! It's sooooo good to hear that new Conan the Barbarian comics will soon be back on the racks!

**—Adam Alande, Pullman, WA**

I was actually touched by your *411* preview [*Wizard* #140]. I'm really looking forward to this book.

**—Charles D. Jones, Baltimore, MD**

That "G.I. Joe" movie poster in your April Fool's issue [*Wizard* #140] was a naughty, naughty tease.

**—Mikael van der Koff, Bridgeport, CT**

from seeing "Rocky III." You see, in said film, Thunderlips tells Rocky that their match will be "the Ultimate Male vs. the Ultimate Meatball."

Ultimate Meatball! It's too perfect to be a coincidence.

**Paul DeKams esq. & Christopher Ritter**
**Hofstra University**
**Hempstead, NY**

**Mark Millar claims no knowledge of this "Rocky III" of which you speak. Nor does he even claim knowledge of meat. He's been a vegetarian for 12 years.**

### Dear *Wizard*,

I'm a huge Marvel Comics fan, but I see one problem with them: an excessive amount of advertisements! In *Ultimate Spider-Man* #24, there are 10 pages of ads. I'm sure everyone would like to read more comics than ads.

**Drew Harbin**
**Columbus, GA**

**If you must pick on Marvel for ads, pick on everyone. 'Cause 22 pages of story in a 32-page comic has been the industry standard for years. And take this, ya young whippersnapper: Not everything was better back in the good ol' days: 1960s-era Marvels often had only 19 or 20 pages of story. You can look it up. And DC books of the same vintage would often have half-page ads *on the same page* as the story! You'd get a half page of Green Lantern making a giant green boxing glove with, like, a half-page ad for Sea Monkeys.**

**Trust me—the current situation is better than it's been in years.**

### Dear Magic Words,

Did Stan Lee intend for Norman Osborn/Green Goblin to be a dual personality like Jekyll & Hyde when he was writing the Spider-Man comic? Or was that something they developed for the "Spider-Man" movie?

**Matt Burhus**
**Bryan, TX**

**Stan the Man is a huge fan of the classics, late 19th and early 20th century horror in particular. He confirms that yes, Osborn & Goblin was a wink and a nod to Jekyll & Hyde.**

### Hey Jim,

1) Is Jim Aparo (in my opinion, the best Batman artist of all time) alive? And if he is, what is he up to?

2) Will Galactus make a comeback anytime soon?

3) Do you think if the "Spider-Clone Saga" would have been delayed until after the "Star Wars: Attack of the Clones" movie release, it would have been better accepted?

**Jose R. Colon**
**daikaiju710@aol.com**

**1) Jim Aparo is indeed alive and well and enjoying retirement in Connecticut.**

**2) Of course. That's what comic book bad guys do. And according to *Fantastic Four* writer and theater fan Mark Waid, the Devourer of Worlds will have a**


**MARVEL COMICS**
10 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
www.marvel.com

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Los Angeles, CA 90025
www.topcow.com

**WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS**
868 Prospect St. #240
La Jolla, CA 92037
www.wildstorm.com

# LETTER ART

The mega-talented creator of this month's best envelope takes home a copy of *Way of the Rat: The Walls of Zhumar*, courtesy of CrossGen Entertainment! Those guys are so cool for donating their stuff, we owe them bigger than Po Po owes Jack Daniels for all that fine whiskey he likes to drink! Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of the envelope

## ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

**DR. STRANGE,** Clark Stepp, Blue Ridge, GA

**TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN,** Douglas Ramussen, Saskatoon, Sadkatchewan

**THE DARKNESS,** Sherman McClain, Houston, TX

**MANGA WOLVERINE,** William Vega, Hialeah, FL

**slightly different agenda. "He'll be playing Nathan Detroit in the Twin Forks, Idaho Playhouse production of 'Guys and Dolls,'" Waid says. "Advance reviews compare him to Darkseid's Conrad Birdie in 'Bye, Bye Birdie.' Tickets available at www.ticketmaster.com."**

**Long story short, he's on the way back. But Waid ain't sayin' when or why.**

**3) No.**

### Magic Words,

I think a perfect extension of Marvel Entertainment would be a casino in Las Vegas! Just think of it—a huge casino with themed games, dealers in vests covered in comic art, a massive movie theater for premieres, a new Marvel Mania restaurant, and a huge pool with an Iceman water slide.

I'd be willing to move my family to work there. Tell Marvel to call me.

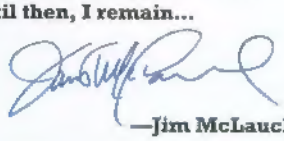
**Brent Tutwiler**
**Doylestown, PA**

**I'm fer it. Then I could blame the Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime for watering down the complimentary scotch.**

**But don't count on it happening. In early 2000, the Nevada Gaming Control Board nixed a plan for Spider-Man-themed slot machines, citing a fear that the machines would lure the little children into the evils of gambling.**

**'Cause comics are just for kids, y'see.**

**That be that for another month of merriment. Come back next ish for the last dog-and-pony show. Now, for the final time, I get to write: Until then, I remain...**



**—Jim McLauchlin.**

*Jim McLauchlin has been writing these taglines for over 100 issues now. Think he'll ever run out? Did it just happen now?*

**Send letters to:**
**Magic Words**
**151 Wells Ave.**
**Congers, NY 10920**
**or e-mail us at JMcLauch@aol.com**

**Please address all subscription /renewal/ #1/2 comic/toy offer concerns to:**
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c/o Wizard Entertainment Group
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
(845) 268-3594
E-mail: subscriptions@wizarduniverse.com
(Please include your full name, address and phone number and be as detailed as possible.)

# NO. 1 WITH A BULLET

## '100 Bullets' team of Azzarello and Risso takes turn on top-selling 'Batman'

**BULLET BOYS** The *100 Bullets* team of Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso take aim at the Dark Knight next year.

DC figured it would have a tough time trying to find a new creative team to take over *Batman* once Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee leave the title in October.

Luckily for the publisher, it had all the creative "ammo" it needed from a pair of Vertigo creators.

After months of fan speculation as to who would take over DC's hottest title when Loeb and Lee go on hiatus following *Batman* #620, the publisher announced that writer Brian Azzarello and penciler Eduardo Risso will pick up the Bat-reins for a five-issue run starting in November's *Batman* #621. Known for their work on the critically acclaimed Vertigo crime thriller *100 Bullets*, Azzarello and Risso were a perfect fit for the underworld of Gotham City in the eyes of DC, Loeb and Lee.

"I don't want to sound too over the top in my praise, but for years, people have known that one of my favorite books is *100 Bullets*, and I can't think of a better creative team to work on Batman," gushed Lee. "I think Brian is perfectly suited for *Batman*; it's a character that plays to his strengths. Meanwhile, Eduardo has a beautiful, compact style that packs a powerful punch that'll work great on *Batman*. Sign me up, I'm there."

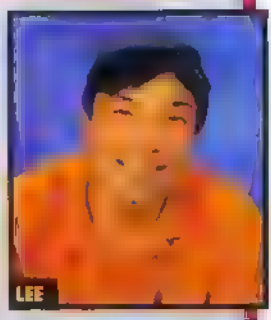
However, according to Azzarello, going from the buzz title of the Vertigo line to the current moneymaker of the DCU has taken a little getting used to.

"I found out quickly that you're not even allowed to use 'f—' and 'Batman' in the same sentence! I'm gonna have a tough time writing this! That's my go-to word!" laughed Azzarello. "Seriously though, you write within the parameters given to you, and the story we want to tell, everybody's on board with 100 percent."

Knowing they have some very big shoes to fill, Azzarello and Risso plan to continue giving Bat-fans a high-flying, action-packed story *a la* Loeb

BAT TO THE FUTURE

# LOEB & LEE: WHAT'S NEXT?



Wanna know what's in store for Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee's next six-issue run on *Batman*?

So do they.

After it was announced in February that Loeb and Lee would extend their run on *Batman* by six issues, fans immediately wanted to know what the dynamic duo have in store to top the current and wildly successful 12-issue "Hush" storyarc. Despite the fact that DC, Loeb and Lee won't go on record with specifics—mainly because it hasn't been officially decided—rumors abound what will happen to *Batman* in 2004, and specifically, what involvement Lee and Loeb will have with the franchise. Possible scenarios include: the Lee/Loeb team returning to the core *Batman* title once Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso's run wraps up in March 2004's issue #625, a six-issue Batman mini-series; or possibly a new ongoing monthly title.

However, according to Loeb, one thing's certain—the Boy Wonder will definitely play a prominent role in the next six issues.

"It'll be a Batman and Robin story," hinted Loeb. "We've been flirting with the idea of starting a new ongoing called *Batman & Robin*, but if it were up to me, this is not about starting new franchises or doing mini-series, this is about trying to make the monthly books as vital as they can be, which is a philosophy that DC is embracing." ■ CS

Lee, Loeb: Paul Mahrdt

and Lee's "Hush" storyarc. And while Azzarello's keeping the juicy details for his run on the down low, *100 Bullets* fans who have grown to love his knack for penning gritty, hardboiled crime fiction won't be let down.

"They're letting me screw with Batman a little," hinted Azzarello. "Something happens to him that pretty much sends him over the edge. By the end of this, he's gonna be like [Green Bay Packers QB] Brett Favre—pass the Vicodin!"

Which leaves the big question: Who's gonna be the big villain during Azzarello and Risso's run?

"What's Batman without his villains, right?" said Azzarello. "So will any of them be showing up in our run? Probably not. The most major villain that'll have a role in this is Killer Croc. I mean, the other villains are gonna be there—there will be a Joker scene—but for the most part, this is all Batman."

Despite the fact that DC offered the opportunity of a lifetime with a run on the white-hot *Batman*, Azzarello wouldn't take the gig unless DC agreed to one major stipulation—he wanted to bring the entire *100 Bullets* crew with him. Therefore, everyone from cover artist Dave Johnson to editor Will Dennis to letterer Clem Robins will make the jump from *100 Bullets* to *Batman*.

"*100 Bullets* is gonna go bimonthly while this is happening, and I didn't want to take any food out of anybody's mouth because of this," related Azzarello. "It wouldn't be fair if [*100 Bullets* colorist] Trish [Mulvihill] was only doing, what, half of what she was doing before? So we're all going over. That was part of the deal, and would've been a deal-breaker for me.

"Plus, Eduardo really wanted to draw Batman," continued Azzarello. "What am I gonna tell him, no?"

While many DCU fans may not be familiar with Azzarello and Risso's work on *100 Bullets*, Loeb quickly pointed out that he has no doubt fans will soon see why the two have been garnering critical acclaim, following their upcoming run on *Batman*.

"Not that anybody ever listens to me, but when Jim and I were talking about who would be great to pass the baton on to, I suggested Brian and Ed if they could work out their *100 Bullets* schedule—and actually even if they couldn't," joked Loeb. "I think what they'll do is dark, twisted, wonderful and very different from what Jim and I are doing, which is what the book will probably need after we go. I think everybody wins, mostly the fans and the readers." ■ CASEY SELIAS

# THE BUZZBIN

DAREDEVIL/ELEKTRA

**ULTIMATE DAREDEVIL** There's a new *Ultimate Daredevil/Elektra* series on the horizon, according to sources at Marvel. Although the creative team is still top secret, don't expect any of the usual suspects. Reportedly, Marvel's courting new, non-comic talent for the series.

**ULTIMATE X-MEN** After completing his first six-issue *Ultimate X-Men* storyarc, writer Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*) says he plans to stay around just a little longer. Look for Bendis to write at last one more arc of the series this fall as Marvel continues its search for a regular *Ultimate X-Men* writer.

**AVENGERS** Even though Geoff Johns doesn't finish his *Avengers* run until late 2003, Marvel's already found his replacement. Although the House of Ideas won't confirm it, Chuck Austen (*Uncanny X-Men*) will reportedly pick up where Johns leaves off.

**MARVEL ORIGINAL ART** One of the hottest rumors in comics claims that there's an internal struggle at Marvel over the publisher's policy of returning original artwork, claiming Marvel will no longer return originals to creators. Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada flatly denied the rumor, claiming it sounds like something the competition is spreading to scare freelancers away from the House of Ideas. "It's simply not true," said Quesada.

**PAT LEE** Dreamwave front man Pat Lee has been working on a top-secret, creator-owned project for the past year and a half, which he promises will be "one of the biggest things I've ever done." It's definitely an ongoing series, but Lee ain't spilling details until he's further along and ready to announce.

**J. SCOTT CAMPBELL** J. Scott Campbell won't spill yet about his eagerly awaited new project, but he did say that the story revolves around a teenage cast with a hi-tech superhero bent, reminiscent of the artist's *Gen*[13] days.

**BATMAN** Rumor around the DC office says there's a new ongoing Bat-series in the works, which would bring the core Bat-books up to five monthly titles.

**SUPERMAN** With *Batman* deemed a certified success, DC's now turning their attention to Superman, and rumor has it some huge plans are in store for Big Blue, beginning with January 2004's *Superman* #200.

**GHOST RIDER** Paul Jenkins is working to get a Ghost Rider project off the ground at Marvel. Why the supernatural biker? 'Cuz he just looks really frickin' cool! "I mean, come on, his head's on fire!" laughed Jenkins. "And he rides around on a flaming motorbike!" Hard to argue with that!

**ASTRO CITY** The next Astro City miniseries hasn't been finalized yet, but it might be a 12-issue storyline called "Dark Age" that will be broken up into four three-issue arcs. The story takes place during the '70s and promises to unveil the mystery surrounding what happened to the Silver Agent.

**EYE OF THE STORM** A major crossover between WildStorm's mature reader "Eye of the Storm" line is currently in the works, which includes the titles *The Authority*, *Wildcats*, *Stormwatch* and *Sleeper*, sources at WildStorm report.

**FIRESTORM** Mike Carey's upcoming *Firestorm* ongoing and Marc Andreyko's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* have been pushed back from summer to late fall/early winter releases, sources at DC have confirmed.

SUPERMAN

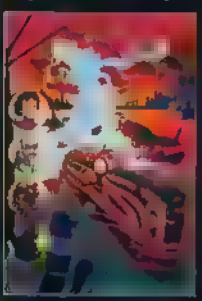
# HOT READS

## 5 books we can't wait to pick up

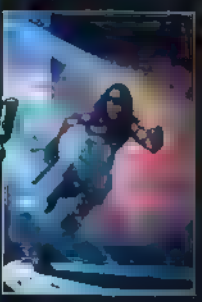
Every month at *Wizard*, our editors read through hundreds of comic books. And like all fans, we get psyched about upcoming storylines and creative changes. Here are the five books that we're champing at the bit to read—and reasons why you should pick them up, too!

**ULTIMATE X-MEN #34** The hottest writer in comics hops on board one of the best-selling titles when Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Daredevil*) joins David Finch for a six-part arc that features Ultimate Spidey teaming up with Wolverine as the feral mutant goes on the lam from the X-Men! And did we mention appearances by Daredevil and the Ultimates?!?

**KINGPIN #1** Crime pays big dividends in this new ongoing series courtesy of sizzling *Incredible Hulk* writer Bruce Jones, with art by Sean Phillips (*Sleeper*) and legendary inker Klaus Janson (*Daredevil*). Follow the exploits of burgeoning Kingpin of Crime Wilson Fisk as he slays his way to the top of the criminal food chain in bloody action that'll make "The Sopranos" look like a tea party!



**LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN II #6** Do NOT miss the final chapter of Alan Moore's literary comic masterpiece! The invading Martians stand on the brink of victory, one of the Leaguers has turned traitor and another winds up dead! Can our Victorian heroes prevail? Will any of them survive for a possible League 3? We can't wait to find out!



**JOHN CARPENTER'S SNAKE PLISSKEN CHRONICLES #1** He's escaped the prison that is New York and the ruined city of L.A., new mercenary/anti-hero Snake Plissken makes his comics debut—and his first destination is Atlantic City, NJ! Will Snake survive the roll of the dice when he tries to boost a $30 million car? We loved the films, and if the comic is half as good, we're adding Snake to our zoo permanently.

**DARK DAYS #1** *30 Days of Night*, about a group of vampires laying siege to an Alaskan town embroiled in a month-long eclipse, laid waste to the comics landscape in 2002, emerging as the sleeper project of the year. Our blood's running cold waiting for this sequel, which finds widowed deputy Stella Olemaun [illegible] to wipe out the blood-suckers for killing her husband.

# CROSSGEN FLEXES MUSCLE TO LAND HE-MAN

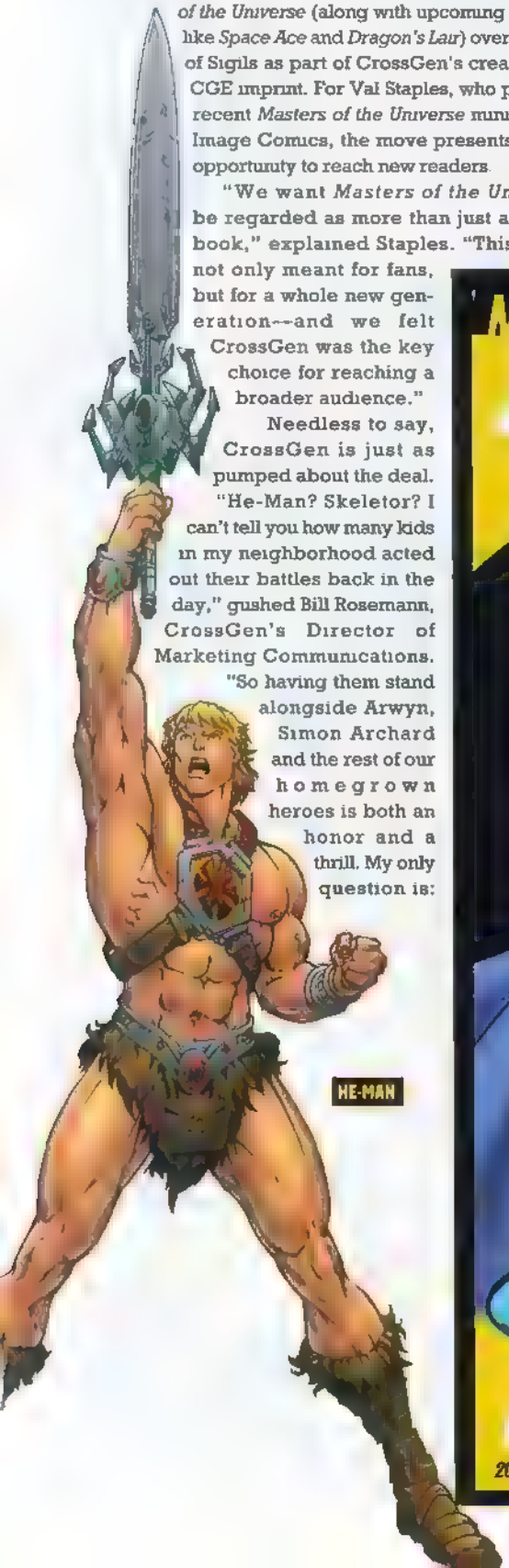
The Prince of Eternia gets a new address this July. CrossGen Entertainment and MVCreations have forged a new alliance that brings the mega-popular *Masters of the Universe* (along with upcoming properties like *Space Ace* and *Dragon's Lair*) over to the land of Sigils as part of CrossGen's creator-owned CGE imprint. For Val Staples, who penned the recent *Masters of the Universe* mini-series for Image Comics, the move presents a perfect opportunity to reach new readers.

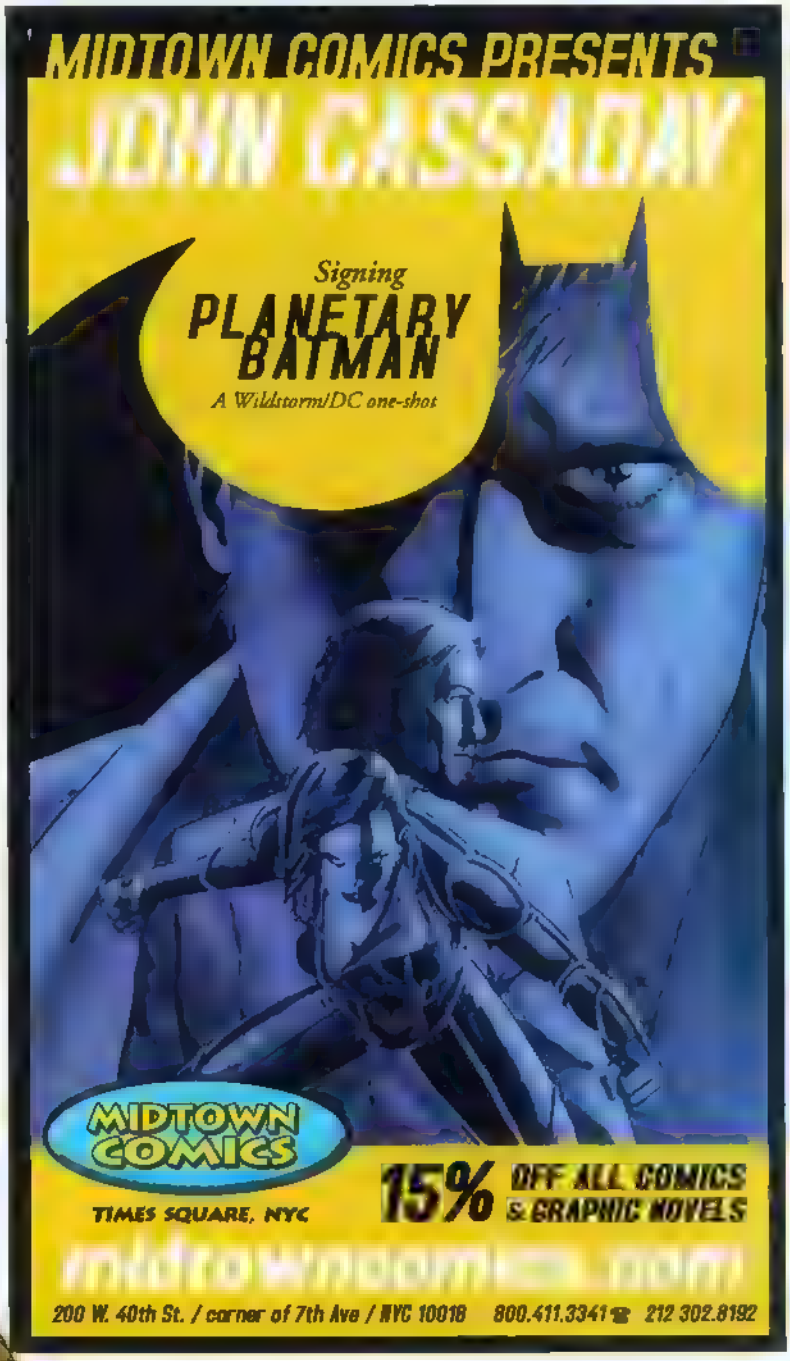
"We want *Masters of the Universe* to be regarded as more than just a nostalgia book," explained Staples. "This *MOTU* is not only meant for fans, but for a whole new generation—and we felt CrossGen was the key choice for reaching a broader audience."

Needless to say, CrossGen is just as pumped about the deal. "He-Man? Skeletor? I can't tell you how many kids in my neighborhood acted out their battles back in the day," gushed Bill Rosemann, CrossGen's Director of Marketing Communications. "So having them stand alongside Arwyn, Simon Archard and the rest of our homegrown heroes is both an honor and a thrill. My only question is: When is Po Po going to smack Orko upside his head?"

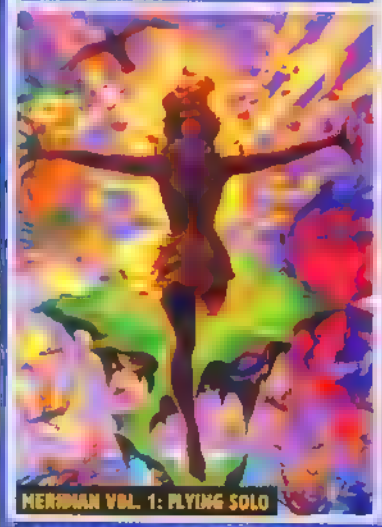
July sees the release of a CrossGen Traveler-sized trade paperback collecting *Masters of the Universe Vol. 1: The Shard of Darkness*, the original four-issue Image series by Staples and penciler Emiliano Santalucia, followed by a series of "Icons of Evil" one-shots, each starring a different villain from He-Man's rogues gallery. Look for *Mer-Man* #1 in July, followed by *Trapjaw* #1 in August and *Tri-Clops* #1 in September. Plus, a *He-Man/Thundercats* mini-series is tentatively scheduled to kick off in August, and Staples plans to launch a brand-new *MOTU* ongoing in early 2004.

■ RICHARD HO



**TEEN BOPPIN'** Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* has been selected for the New York Public Library for its "Books for the Teen Age" 2003 List. Writer Barbara Kesel attended a reception in New York on March 22 celebrating the announcement of the prestigious list. "As evidenced by books like *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*, kids and teens do like to read," said Kesel. "And now it's comics' time to shine!"



MERIDIAN VOL. 1: FLYING SOLO

**HESTER CATCHES SOME ZZZZZ'S** Known for his work on DC's Vertigo imprint, writer Phil Hester has started work on an Oni project with artist Mike Huddleston (*Harley Quinn*) called *Deep Sleeper*. Similar in flavor to *The Coffin*, the four-issue mini-series deals with the horrors of metaphysics. "Our main character stumbles into the world of astral travel and finds a bad guy that wayleys astral travelers and uses their energy for his own means," explained Hester. "The protagonist then has to combat that menace and lose his family in the process."

**NEVER SAY NEVER** *Powers* artist Michael Avon Oeming has been tapped to illustrate the cover to the first issue of Marvel's new *Last Army* mini-series, which will be written by Chris Claremont. The *Last Army* mini-series will be released in June.

**GAIMAN HONORED** Superstar writer Neil Gaiman has been honored by the British Science Fiction Association and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. Gaiman received the "Best Novel" award for his novel *American Gods* from the SFFWA, and an award for [illegible] from the BSFA.

**MARY JANE: THE NOVEL** Launching its new Young Adult Novel selection, Marvel Comics releases romance novelist Judith O'Brien with illustrations by Mike Mayhew (*Vampirella*), the novel follows Mary [illegible]

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

# CHARACTER TO WATCH

## SUPERBOY

**The boy is back in town!**

Despite his ongoing series getting the ax last year, Superboy has recently made a triumphant return to prominence in the DCU, thanks in part to his starring role in July's *Teen Titans* by writer Geoff Johns and penciler Mike McKone. In addition to giving Superboy a more reserved, down-to-earth attitude, Johns hints that there's a huge surprise in store for the Teen of Steel at the end of the first issue of *Titans*–one that will shake the character to the very core!

On top of *Teen Titans*, Superboy's gonna have a pretty busy summer and early fall with cameos in two different titles. In June's *Batgirl* #41, love is in the air as Supes takes a trip to Gotham City where he once again comes face to face with Batgirl, who harbors a secret crush on the young Kryptonian. Then in October's *Legion* #25, Superboy races off to the 31st century to team up with the Legion for the book's 45th anniversary issue. Fans can also vote on the DC Website (www.dccomics.com) for which book they'd like to see Superboy become an ongoing character–*Teen Titans* or *Legion*.

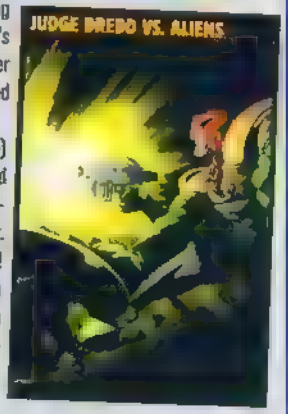
# HEAT INDEX

**No one loves comics like *Wizard*, and here's some cool things we read and saw this month.**

**BRIAN K. VAUGHAN** The writer went 3-for-3 with three home runs in April, including two spectacular debuts: *Mystique* #1, *Runaways* #1 and *Y–The Last Man* #10. If Vaughan keeps cranking out great material like this, he'll soon be firmly entrenched with Geoff Johns and Brian Bendis as the most versatile and prolific writers in comics!

**DAREDEVIL #46 (Marvel)** Speaking of Bendis, this ish was our favorite of his run so far, featuring the return of a sexy-as-hell Typhoid Mary, and the Kingpin as well! Plus, there's a memorable cameo by *Alias*' Jessica Jones! And perhaps the greatest line we've read so far this year: "*L'chaim*, fat ass." A brilliant issue from cover to cover!

**MIDNIGHT MOVER #1 (Oni Press)** If you dig colorful casts of bizarre and sleazy characters, this hard-boiled crime story is for you! A disgraced soldier working as a bodyguard for an escort service goes on the lam when he's framed for murder. Throw in two cops–one an S&M freak, the other a Bible thumper–a cross-dressing madam and a psycho killer, and *Midnight* makes for a great late-night read.




**JUDGE DREDD VS. ALIENS: INCUBUS (Dark Horse)** Who is the law when Aliens run amok in Mega-City 1? Judge Dredd of course! This is one of the fastest-paced, bloodiest and action-packed Aliens crossovers ever, thanks to Dredd playing exterminator. Grokk it–let's see more of these franchises together in the future!

**THE ABOMINATION (Marvel)** In *Hulk* #53, the Abomination embarks on a rampage that's one of the most memorable we've seen in comics–cars, buses and buildings being flung about while terrified citizens scatter and get tossed around like rag dolls! Finally, a supervillain worthy of going toe to toe with the Hulk!

and friendship with Peter Parker.

**NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE!** You know him for his delectable renditions of beautiful women, but *Liberty Meadows* creator Frank Cho proves he can draw a kickass demonic tough guy with his upcoming

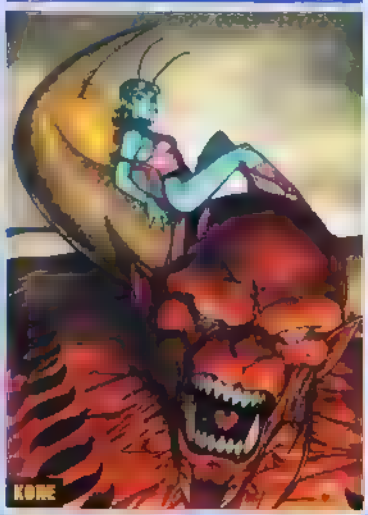
the artist is chugging along on his *Shanna: The She-*

won't solicit the book until nearly all eight are in the can.

**NO WITCH HUNT** Devil's Due's new horror series, *Kore*, was originally slated to welcome Top Cow's Witchblade as a guest star in August's

mission to loan *Voltron* to Top Cow for a *Battle of the Planets* crossover as part of the arrangement, so the deal for Witchblade's appearance in

and company plan to introduce a character they were originally going to use–Rakshasa.




**SEE YOU IN HELL** Skottie Young is no longer drawing the Brian Augustyn-penned Rocket Comics title, *Hell*. The artist's workload on Marvel's *Human*

became too overwhelming. He'll be replaced by Todd

**GRIST AND BEAR IT** Bronze Age indy creator Paul Grist is wrapping up his pre-Image run of *Jack Staff* in August with a final 32-page B+W summer blowout before continuing the book's current full-color run. Next up for Grist's Dancing Elephant Press is a new

installment of Grist's crime fiction series, *Kane*.

**BLAST FROM THE PAST** Astro City artist

(H-E-R-O) that harkens back to the look of Batman and Gotham City in the comics of the 1950s. DC has yet to announce when the story will run.

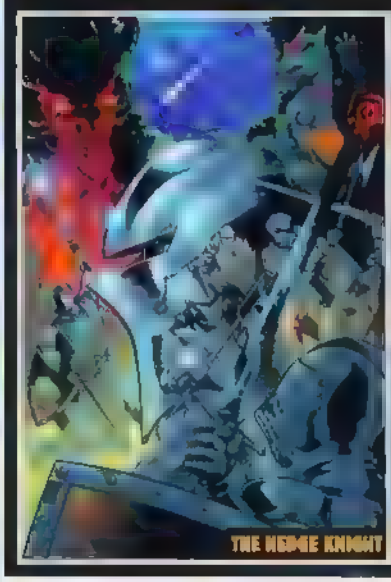
# COMPANY TO WATCH

## ROARING STUDIOS

For the Dabel brothers, comic book fantasy has become a successful reality.

Ernst, Lee, Pascal and David Dabel founded Roaring Studios a year ago, and since then, the family-run operation has leapt onto the industry's fast track, having recently been picked up by Image Comics. With its emphasis on high-octane art and high-concept fantasy, the studio has attracted talented creators like Mike Miller (who currently serves as Roaring Studios' art director), Brett Booth and Michael Kaluta to its growing roster.

While the studio eventually plans to expand the number of creator-owned titles in its lineup, the Dabels have devoted a great deal of their initial focus on securing adaptations of works written by popular sci-fi and fantasy authors. Case in point? Roaring Studios' upcoming six-issue limited series *The Hedge Knight*, based on a novella by *New York Times* best-selling fantasy author George R. R. Martin. The studio landed the rights to the adaptation (which will be penned by writer Ben Avery and drawn by Miller) after Martin rejected offers from both Marvel and DC. And that's only the beginning, as Roaring Studios continues to field offers from other best-selling authors searching for a place to bring their stories to comic book life.




But if creator-owned goodness with a sci-fi/fantasy twist is your bag, check out the bimonthly *Legacy*. Written by Carmen Trafficati with art by Edu Francisco, *Legacy* transports readers to a world in which magic and technology are at war.

As for the future? Projects currently in the works include an adaptation of TSR's Dragonlance property by Mark Waid (*Fantastic Four*), as well as a slew of creator-owned projects ranging from sci-fi westerns to horror suspense. For the inside scoop, check out www.roaringstudios.com.

★ ★ ★ ★ CHICAGO ★ ★ ★ ★

WIZARD WORLD

COMICS · TOYS · ANIME · MANGA · GAMING · TV · MOVIES

Fanboy-cum-filmmaker Kevin Smith (pictured) will be a Special Guest for all three days of Wizard World Chicago 2003, Aug. 8-10 at the Rosemont Convention Center, to help promote his brand-new upcoming Miramax film, "Jersey Girl," starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez!

A self-professed comic book junkie, Smith reflects his love of the medium in many of his movies, including "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy" and "Jay and Silent Bob Strikes Back" and when he isn't wowing movie-goers with his flicks, he's dazzling fanboys with his comic works, such as *Daredevil*, *Green Arrow* and *Spider Man/Black Cat*.

And that's not all, Wizard World Chicago 2003 will also feature:

- A joint signing by the red-hot *Batman* creative team of writer Jeph Loeb and artist Jim Lee, who just happens to be Wizard World Chicago 2003's Guest of Honor!
- Live-action monster wrestling with the colorful characters of the Kaiju Big Battel. Witness as the costumed crazies run roughshod over the Rosemont Convention Center!
- Signings and appearances by Special Guest and fan-favorite painter, Alex Ross (*JLA: Secret Origins*, *JLA: Liberty & Justice*).

TICKETS ($20 for 1 day, $40 for 3 days) can be purchased online at www.wizarduniverse.com.

# BYRNE, CLAREMONT REUNITE AT DC

The JLA recently put out a recruitment call and received two very unexpected applicants—Chris Claremont and John Byrne.

According to DC Comics, the former *Uncanny X-Men* team, who were responsible for such groundbreaking stories as "The Dark Phoenix Saga" and "Days of Future Past," will reunite for a five- or six-issue arc of *JLA* in spring 2004.

BYRNE

CLAREMONT

Claremont and Byrne, who shared co-plotting duties on *Uncanny X-Men* with Claremont scripting and Byrne penciling, haven't done a monthly stint together in over 20 years because of a falling out over credit for the duos' X-Men work.

The two were rumored to be collaborating on a final X-Men tale together last year, but the deal reportedly fell apart after Marvel cancelled Byrne's *X-Men: The Forgotten Years* title.

According to Claremont, the biggest difference between this collaboration and previous attempts to reunite the epic creators was Byrne's availability.

"[DC Senior Editor] Mike Carlin called me up and said, 'Do you want to do a *JLA* story with John Byrne' and I said, 'Hell, yes!'" recounted Claremont. "It's really John's story. At this stage, I'm waiting to see what the art is like. He's asked me to work on it and I'm happily excited to do so."

Although all of the details of the story that Byrne and Claremont have in mind aren't being released at this time, Claremont said he's already jazzed that he'll be working with Byrne again and insisted all their differences are in the past.

"I'm tremendously excited," exclaimed Claremont. "The chance to work with one of the finest artists and storytellers in the business is amazing. Even without our history, it's a no-brainer."

Claremont also teased that this project could be the beginning of the two working together more often. "Anything can happen," said Claremont. "I would certainly be happy if that happened, but I'm sure that depends on how well we work together on this, how the market receives it and how excited and interested John is to continue the relationship." ■ MIKE COTTON

DARK PHOENIX

# ROMITA FAMILY KICKS OFF NEW FUNDRAISER

*Amazing Spider-Man* artist John Romita Jr. and his family are organizing another fundraiser to help Romita's niece, Jordan Atherton, who was diagnosed two years ago with Medulloblastoma, a cancer that attacks the brain and spinal chord.

Currently, the family is raising funds for the 3-year-old to see specialists who are very interested in her unique case, according to Romita.

Romita, who helped raise over $25,000 last year for the toddler's medical expenses, said the family was very happy with Atherton's recovery so far but there's still work to be done.

"Because Jordan has such a unique case, her treatment will benefit research on the disease," said Romita. "The specialists we're talking to now want to study her progress and hopefully that research will help other children."

The family plans to auction off a number of original art pieces and collector's items online, including copies of *Amazing Spider-Man* #36, signed by writer J. Michael Straczynski, "Spider-Man" movie posters autographed by stars Kirsten Dunst and Tobey Maguire. Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee has also donated an original *Spider-Man* newspaper strip for the upcoming auctions.

To check on these auctions or donate directly to the Jordan Atherton Trust, please visit **www.SavingBabyJordan.com**. Parties can also send donations directly to the trust at Jordan Atherton Trust, P.O. Box 27543, San Diego, CA 92198. ■ NC

# ROCKIN' ROSS!

## Alex Ross develops Anthrax...an album cover that is

Alex Ross is not a rock star, he just paints covers for 'em.

Not content with painting *Wizard* covers and oversized mega-projects, the painter extraordinaire recently put brush to canvas for Anthrax, the classic heavy metal band. Their new album, "We've Come For You All," was released in the U.S. in April (after debuting in Japan and Europe in February), sporting a slick piece of Ross-painted goodness on the cover.

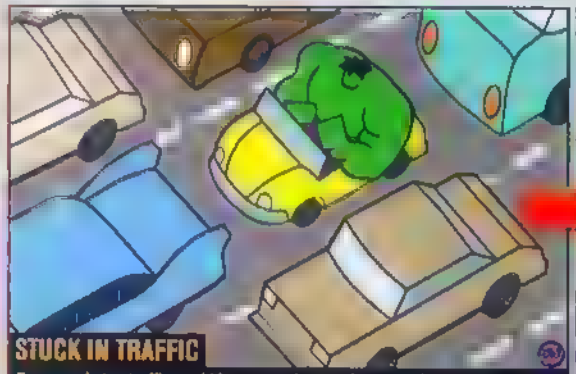
"I worked with Charlie Benante, who's the songwriter and composer of the group," explained Ross. "We worked hand in hand on the piece. I produced a handful of sketches, and he picked what he liked. The band also did a quick photo shoot in various poses, which I used for reference."

So how did Ross, whose musical interests fall closer to the Beatles, fall in with the speed-thrash metal crowd?

"They contacted my Website!" revealed Ross. "They have a long history of being comic fans. They've done stuff involving Judge Dredd with one of their previous songs, so they're well-known fanboys. Plus, I thought it was pretty hysterical that I would get called for any sort of heavy metal album, so I was glad to get the call!"

# THE HULK WAY

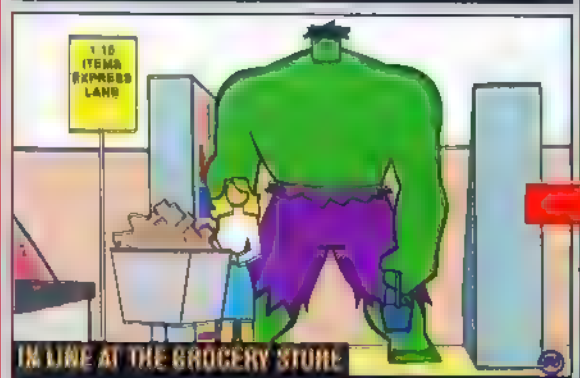
All of us at some point have gotten our card rejected at the ATM or downloaded just one too many spam e-mails and thought to ourselves, "What would the Hulk do?" Indeed, his simple yet direct approach has made the Jade Giant one of the greatest problem-solvers of our time, inspiring everyone from corporate efficiency experts to the U.S. government itself. But just because the bigwigs are doing it doesn't mean that you can't benefit from a little bit of his gamma-irradiated wisdom. Here's how you can deal with some everyday problems–the Hulk way! ■ **JUSTIN ACLIN**



## STUCK IN TRAFFIC

Everyone hates traffic, and it's worse when you're seven feet tall, weigh a ton and can only afford a VW Beetle–the *old* kind. First, apprise yourself of the situation. Does the traffic jam have a foreseeable end? Will it resolve itself in five minutes or 90 minutes? Gauge your reaction based on how severe the jam is.

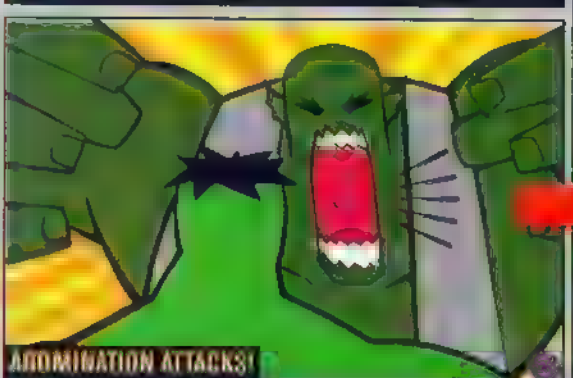
Step out of the vehicle. Thrust your gargantuan hands into the highway concrete and grab firmly. In a wave-like motion, pull up and then snap down the highway, like shaking out a carpet. Once the roadway is clear of puny humans, place the road back down, reenter your vehicle and drive away.




## IN LINE AT THE GROCERY STORE

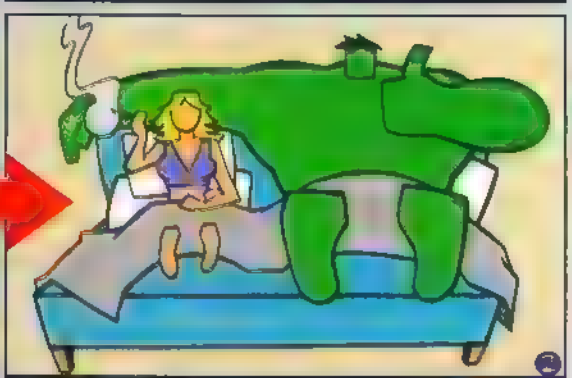
The express checkout is meant for rushed shoppers with less than 10 items. It's especially suitable for people such as yourself, who want necessary supplies and then be left alone. Why can't puny humans just leave you *alone*?!? Unfortunately, shoppers seeking a shortcut abuse the express checkout.

Bring your hands together in front of you in a clapping motion, with the force of a small bomb exploding. The resulting sonic boom and gale-force winds will send the offending shopper and their groceries flying. Pay for your items, then leap away to seek the solitude that only the desert can offer.



## ABOMINATION ATTACKS!

Abomination attacks are the third-leading cause of accidental deaths in the U.S. among males 18–45. Should the Abomination seek you out by bellowing a terrible sound that human vocal chords could never make, don't panic. The Abomination is bigger, stronger and smarter. But you *can* best him.



Take refuge in a small desert café operated by a mysterious woman. This is the Abomination's wife. Make sweet love to her (see next issue's graphic, "How to Make Sweet Love Like the Hulk"). The resulting jealousy will cause the Abomination to go insane. Slip on your purple pants and leap away.

# COVER STORY

**Once upon a time...**

**Heck, every story starts that way, and the story behind *Wizard* is no exception. Wanna know how *Wizard* broke from its humble beginnings to become the #1 comic book and pop culture magazine in the world? Then you'll wanna pick up the *Wizard Big Covers Book Vol. 1*, on sale now! You'll not only get loads of backstory on how *Wizard* rose to prominence, you'll get an amazing art gallery of every cover from *Wizard* #1 to #100!**

**And we're so stoked about our upcoming *Wizard Big Covers Book Vol. 1* that we just had to indulge in a little shameless self-promotion and highlight some of the reasons why this hardcover project is a must-have project for *Wizard*-philes!**

## 306 REASONS TO MAKE YOU GO "WOW"

Over 300 pieces of art, including every *Wizard* cover between #1–#100, "nearly run" covers that didn't make the cut and never-before-seen sketches by the industry's top talents.

## 196 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAPER CUTS

As in 196 pages long. Which sounds even cooler when you say "196 FULL-COLOR" pages. And did we mention the high-gloss paper and hardcover format? No? It's on high-gloss paper with a hardcover format.

## 165 PEEKS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Take a no-holds-barred look at the stories behind the creation of every *Wizard* cover, from the first Alex Ross *Wizard* cover that we woke him out of bed to do (#41) to the most controversial cover of all time (#10).

## 85 THE ISSUE NUMBER OF THE COVER THAT ALMOST BROKE US

Take an in-depth tour of the five-month process that goes into the creation of most *Wizard* covers, including the heartbreak of switching artists in the middle of a project, the politics of inter-company covers and why some artists have dubbed *Wizard* the most demanding clients they've ever worked for.

## 80 OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN OUR ROLODEX

Including nine different Jim Lee covers (including the Batman cover to *Wizard* #89, Lee's second Dark Knight image ever!). Plus, 10 Alex Ross covers, eight Joe Quesada covers and tons more by J. Scott Campbell, Adam Hughes, Adam Kubert, Andy Kubert and all sorts of crazy-talented artist folks.

## 33 CHARACTERS—A WIZARD RECORD

That's the most amount of characters to ever appear on one of our covers. But what artist pulled off that feat? With what characters? And which artist drew the most *Wizard* covers? What character appeared the most amount of times? And what's the one superhero who's never appeared on a *Wizard* cover...even though we had five covers slotted for them?

## 1 BOOK THAT ANSWERS ALL

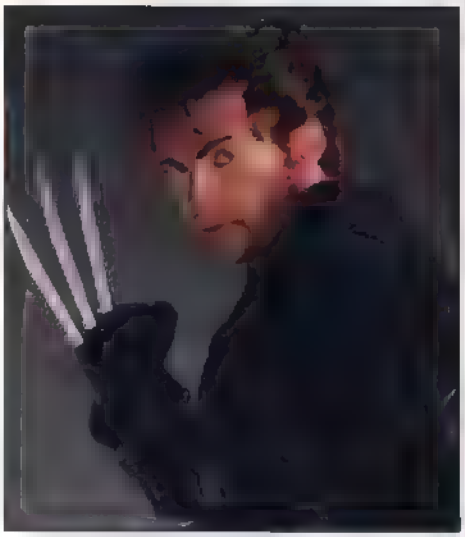
...and tells all and—more importantly—shows all.

It's the *Wizard Big Book of Covers Vol. 1*, a unique look at the inner workings of *Wizard* magazine and the fan-favorite covers that kick giant ass!

**MORE COVER WORK** To get the full scoop on all the behind-the-scenes goodies that went into creating the first 100 *Wizard* covers, pick up the *Wizard Big Covers Book Vol. 1* on sale now!

# 5 QUESTIONS WITH...

## THE 'X2' CAST AND CREW!



**Now that 'X2' is complete, have you given any thought to 'X3'?**

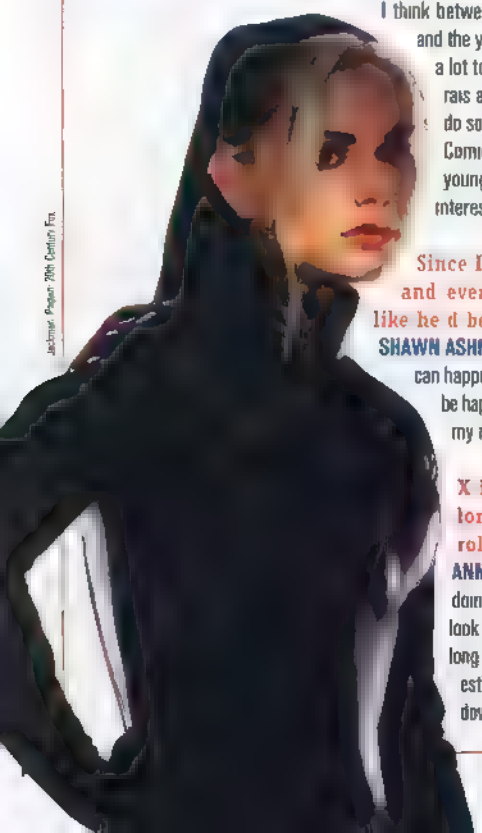
**DIRECTOR BRYAN SINGER:** "When shooting the first 'X-Men' film I thought a lot about ['X2'] and in keeping with that, there are things that were layered into 'X2' that could suggest an evolution of future films. But each film we seem to lose a character. We lost Beast in this film, we lost Angel, I think, in this one. Gambit's a character I like a lot. There are other characters I'd like to explore. A third film really depends on the circumstances. I don't know if Halle [Berry] would be back because of the function of her character and her career path. I'd be hesitant to go into a third picture without Wolverine, though. One film really does give way to the next. Just like a good comic book, this is a saga."

**What storylines have been discussed for possible X-sequels?**

**PRODUCER LAUREN SHULER-DONNER:** "I think the Phoenix story could be 'X3' or 'X4.' We have a lot of ideas we're bouncing around now. We actually toyed with doing a Phoenix story in 'X2' and then decided it wasn't all encompassing enough. We want people to really get used to the X-universe. I think we'd go ahead with a third film even if one or two of the cast aren't interested. One of the reasons that we've gone into the X-Men universe is because there's a million stories there. Each of the characters could spin off into their own movies. We'd love to stay with Bryan [Singer] though. If Bryan, for any reason, couldn't do it, we would have to move on though."

**With the possibility of spinoffs, would you do a solo 'Wolverine' film?**

**HUGH JACKMAN (Wolverine, above):** "I'd be interested. I like the Japanese part of Wolverine's life. I think between the moment of Wolverine getting the claws and the years leading up until the first 'X-Men' film, there's a lot to be explored—the time in Japan with the samurais and he even got married at one point. I'd love to do something like that. The *Origin* series from Marvel Comics would be interesting, too. That would be a younger Wolverine than I could play, but it's a very interesting story."



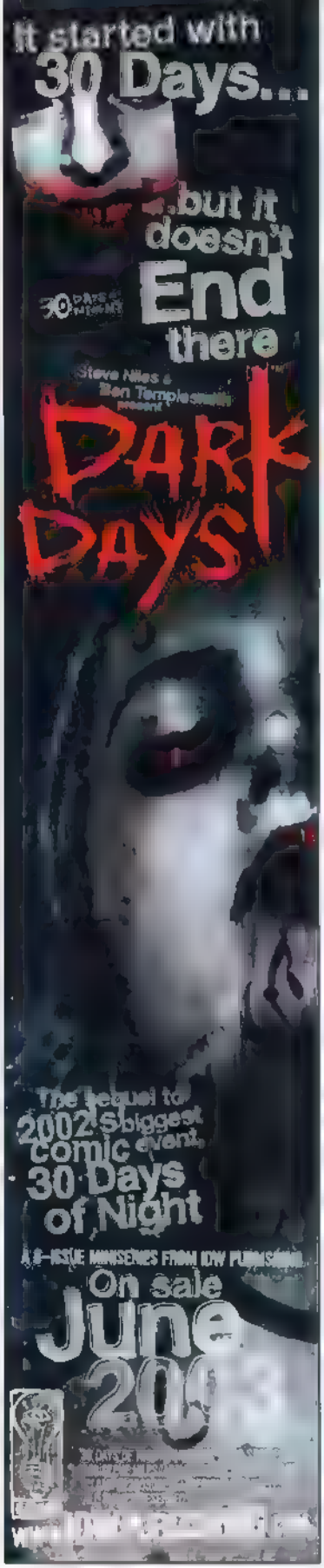
Jackman: Photo: 20th Century Fox

**Since Iceman upped his screen time in 'X2' and even got his own uniform, do you feel like he'd be one of the core characters in 'X3'?**

**SHAWN ASHMORE (Iceman):** "There's a lot of cool things that can happen and some open ends. If it all comes together I'd be happy to come back. I mean, Pyro pretty much torches my neighborhood—I'd probably want some payback."

**X-Men's such a big franchise now, how long do you see yourself reprising the role of Rogue?**

**ANNA PAQUIN (Rogue, left):** "I don't see myself doing the 'X-Men' films indefinitely. I think I might look a little weird at 90, wearing tight leather. But as long as they keep coming up with things that are interesting and really cool stories, I wouldn't turn them down. Who would turn down a great job?"

# LAST WOMAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

## DC/MARVEL GIRLS GONE WILD!

### THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

| MARVEL | | DC |
|---|---|---|
| All the Marvel chicks | TEAM | All the DC tamatas |
| Jean Grey, mutant married to Cyclops | BIG GUN | Wonder Woman, mythological broad who fought a cyclops |
| Firestar | REDHEAD | Starfire |
| Midriff | MOST EXPLOITED BODY SURFACE | Cleavage |
| Trading Spaces | [illegible] (COLLECTIVELY) | Will & Grace |

A flash of light, the sizzle of scorched ozone and all the female heroes of the Marvel and DC Universes find themselves face to face with one thought burning brightly in their minds: FIGHT! Wonder Woman leads the charge, barreling through Rogue and Warbird before being locked in battle with an enraged She-Hulk. Elektra makes short work of the Huntress and Black Canary before being fought to a standstill by Batgirl. The temperature begins to climb on the battlefield, but the women—costumes pasted to their tight superheroine bodies with sweat—carry on.

Starfire slips into her berserker warrior mode, cutting low the Scarlet Witch and Storm before meeting her match in the Invisible Woman. With costumes torn and tattered, the battle rages. Jean Grey feels the Phoenix Force begin to build and welcomes it, rebuffing the combined attacks of Power Girl, Mary Marvel and Hawkgirl. Star vs. Spider-Girl! Jade vs. the Wasp! White Queen vs. Saturn Girl! The Marvel heroines—bosoms heaving, bodies exhausted, their powers nearly depleted—look to even the odds by bogging down DC's speedsters, and strategically move the battlefield to a large kiddie pool filled with butterscotch pudding. Black Cat pulls at Wonder Girl's hair, Mystique slaps Harley Quinn and Black Widow tackles Poison Ivy, pinning her to the floor.

"Not too shabby, eh?" asks the Watcher, giving Superman a nudge as they both peer through his "What If?" portal of infinite possibilities. "You kiddin'?" smiles the Kryptonian, downing another handful of delectably sweet Orville Reddenbacher Kettle Corn. "This kicks X-ray vision's ass!"

**WINNER:** Uatu & Kal

this [illegible] brawl drawn by ED BENES & ALEX LEI

# OPENING PITCH

BY RICHARD HO

## STEP 1: THE IDEA

WRITER: For aspiring writers, the first step has to be coming up with a killer idea. Got a really cool spin for a *Brother Voodoo* ongoing book? Think you've got a dynamite concept for a mini-series starring the 3-D Man? Or maybe you've got some brand-new characters just dying to make it onto the printed page?

Grab your keyboard and get it into the form of a script for a 22-page comic!

Think about the kinds of stories you've always wanted to read, the stuff that would make you say, "Holy crap!" Epic's gonna let creators go in bold new directions, so go nuts! But make sure you follow the principles of good storytelling (see May's *Marville* #7 for a handy how-to guide). And if you plan on telling a story that goes beyond one issue, make sure you include a one-page outline of what comes next.

**ARTIST:** For aspiring artists, it's all about the samples. Whether you're a penciler, inker, colorist or letterer, strap yourself to your drawing table and don't get up until you've cranked out five pages of art that scream, "Bow before my incredible talent!"

## STEP 3: NO 'I' IN 'TEAM'

WRITER: You're in! Epic deems you worthy of publication! You get a nice acceptance letter and an even nicer check for $500. Do a little dance!

Then, when you're nice and ready, start preparing for the next step. Unless you're Mike Mignola or Jeff Smith, you're gonna need some art help. After you get the greenlight, start building the rest of your creative team by searching for Epic-approved artists on Marvel's Website.

Speaking of Epic-approved artists ...

**ARTIST:** They like you! Epic certifies that you're up to snuff, and you receive a nice acceptance letter (sorry, no check). Marvel will post your work online to allow Epic writers to search for potential partners. So wait by your phone or computer for the offers to start pouring in!

## STEP 4: GET PAID PLAYA

THE TEAM: Get crackin'! Now that you've reeled in your partners in crime, it's time to put your money where your word balloons are.

Once your team completes the first five pages of your book, save them on a CD and ship that bad boy to Epic for approval. If all goes well, you'll get the green light to proceed, along with another check for $500 for your team! Split the dough among your cohorts—but be sure to spend some of it on important stuff, like more art supplies, ya hear?

# Five steps to becoming Marvel's next superstar!

You know you're the greatest talent the industry has never seen. Here's your chance to prove it. With the launch of Marvel's new Epic line everyday fans like you can achieve the ultimate fanboy's dream: having your very own comic published by the House of Ideas. Whether you're an aspiring writer or a wannabe artist, Epic gives you the chance to ride your ideas into superstardom. But before you can get that kickass Stingray story you've been dying to write off the ground, you've gotta prove that you've got what it takes. That's where the Epic submission process comes in.

Not sure how to get started? Relax! *Wizard*'s got you covered. We'll go over every step of the submission process, giving you the inside scoop on how to make sure your stuff gets noticed. The ball's in your court. Now go take the industry by storm!

## STEP 2: PAPER ROUTE

**WRITER:** You've finished the fun part—now it's time for the tedious paperwork. Get to the Epic section of Marvel's Website (**www.marvel.com/epic**) and download the following forms: Idea Submission Form, Writer's Work for Hire Agreement, W-9 Tax Form, and Creator-Owned Agreement (if your script isn't set in the Marvel U. and doesn't use Marvel characters).

After you fill everything out, package it along with your script and a self-addressed stamped envelope (for the all-important acceptance or rejection letter), and ship that thing off to Epic!

**ARTIST:** Same as above. Download and fill out the following forms: Idea Submission Form, Artwork Release Form. Then, make high-quality photocopies of the samples you slaved over, bundle them along with the forms and a self-addressed stamped envelope, and mail that sucker off!

## STEP 5: THE WHOLE ENCHILADA

**EVERYONE:** Finish the rest of your masterpiece, and submit all 22 pages for final approval. If the folks at Epic love it, a $7,000 check will be put in the mail for your entire creative team!

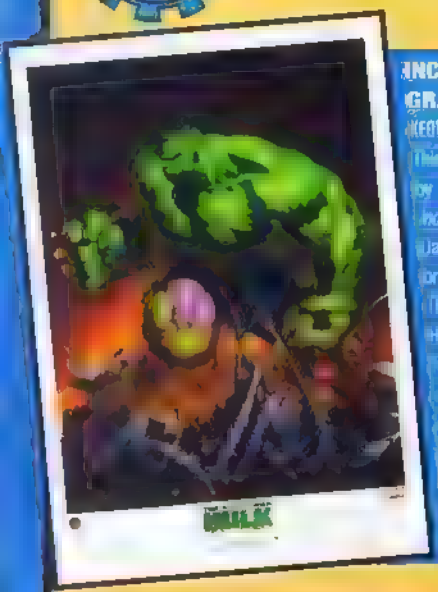
But more importantly, you get to sit back, relax, and let Marvel's marketing and sales machine take care of the rest! And if all goes well, walk into your local comic book shop in a few months and see your baby on the shelves.

And hey…when *Wizard* calls you up after you've hit the big time, remember who got ya started on the road to stardom!

Illustration by Ryan Dunlavey

# INCREDIBLE CO

Dynamic Forces and Wizard Entertainment team up to present the coolest Hulk comic swag, just in time for the June 20 release of "Hulk"!

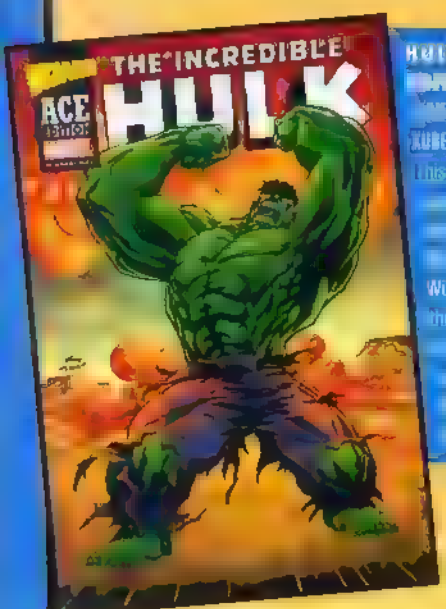


**INCREDIBLE HULK LITHOGRAPH SIGNED BY ARTIST DALE KEOWN** ..... $49.99

This lithograph features artwork by one of the most influential *Incredible Hulk* artists of all time, Dale Keown, the man who brought the Hulk to new heights. This powerful rendition of the Hulk is available now for the first time as a Dynamic Forces exclusive lithograph! Don't miss out on what may be one of the prizes of your Hulk collection. Measures 18" by 24" and printed on archival 80lbs. Gallerie Silk Stock.

**INCREDIBLE HULK LITHOGRAPH "THE FACE OF RAGE" SIGNED BY ARTIST ADAM KUBERT** ..... $39.99

Here's your chance to recapture this glorious image by another Incredible Hulk great, Adam Kubert! Hurry up and get this, 'cause you don't want to make the Hulk angry—and nobody can draw the Hulk angrier than Adam Kubert! Available both unsigned and signed by Adam Kubert and beautifully colored and re-mastered by Jason Chung. Measures 18" by 24" and printed on archival 80lbs. Gallerie Silk Stock.




**HULK #1 WIZARD ACE EDITION**

KUBERT ..... $49.99

This incredible issue of the first

Wizard Authentic bring you the unbelievable ultimate col-

**WIZARD ALEX ROSS MIL- COLLECTION SIGNED BY**

Alex Ross! And many of the

plete Alex Ross collection of everything Ross has done from beginning to end. Brought to you by *Wizard* and signed by Ross

he fans should not miss

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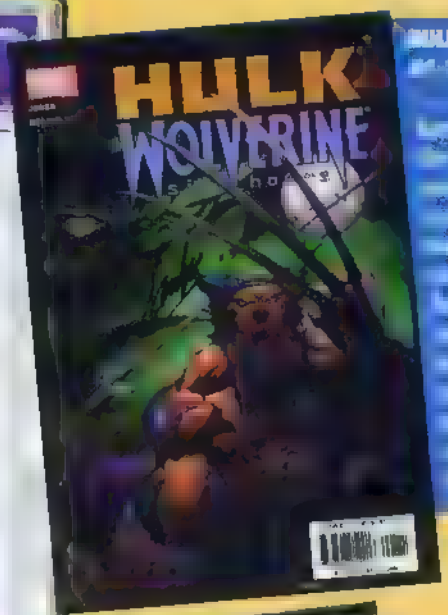


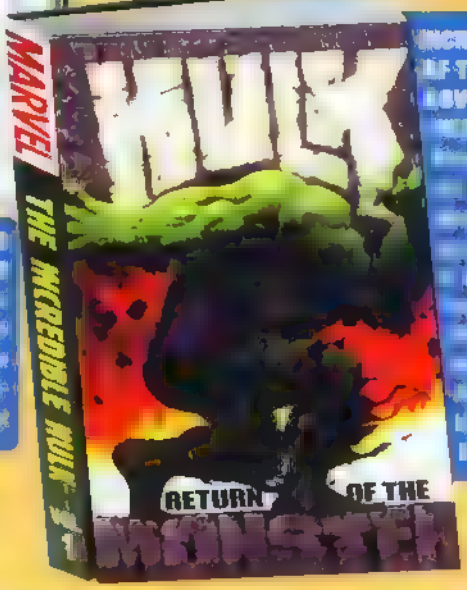


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# TAG TEAM

## *Batman and Superman team up in a new series to take down the leader of the free world*

**By Richard Ho**

The President of the United States has just met his match

Starting this August, the Man of Steel and the Dark Knight Detective join forces for the long haul in DC's highly anticipated *Superman/Batman* ongoing series. Writer Jeph Loeb and artist Ed McGuinness kick things off with a six-issue arc that promises to shatter the status quo of the DCU

"The idea behind the story is to get Luthor out of the White House and back to being the No. 1 villain in the DC Universe," explains former *Superman* scribe and current *Batman* writer Loeb. "We all know how horrible Luthor is, but there's nothing he's done as president that anyone's been able to prove as a way of getting him out of office."

That's all about to change.

"What's coming is a gigantic piece of proof," divulges Loeb. "It'll be revealed by the end of issue #1, and the choice Luthor makes to deal with it will ultimately be his undoing. But he may blow up half the planet in the process!"

The struggle to unseat Luthor turns friend against friend as various DC heroes must choose between defending the office of the presidency and doing the right thing. "Members of the JSA and members of the JLA are going to have to pick sides," says Loeb. "Captain Marvel's coming after Superman, and Hawkman's coming after Batman."

Sound big? For Loeb, that's the only way to go—especially when you've got two of comics' greatest icons sitting in your storytelling sandbox. "These are not going to be little personal stories," promises the writer. "This is going to be a big, giant, kick-ass book. Having both of these characters in one comic, we're certainly going for that epic feel. The first issue lights the fuse, and from that point on, it gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger."

And look for a steady stream of high-profile guest artists to alternate six-issue stints with regular artist McGuinness. "Because we're going to have these two giant characters, we want the best people in the community to know that these arcs are designed for them to be able to tell a six-issue story that has a beginning, a middle and an end," explains Loeb. "We'll always defend the belief that if you wake any artist up in the middle of the night and offer them the chance to draw one character, they will say either Batman or Superman. So here's a chance to do both!"

So sit back and get ready for the fireworks. And if you can't wait until August, check out this explosive scene from *Superman/Batman* #1 in our exclusive eight-page preview!

Metropolis.
This is the part of the job I like best.
High above the city I can see the horizon.
Odd as it sounds, it reminds me of Kansas.
S.T.A.R LABS
The way the wheat would cut across the north field as if it were going to roll on forever.
The stillness, except for the wind.
And... my Dad would gently remind me... it was time to go to work.
I--
BAM

--ACTUALLY FELT THAT!
KRASH
UH.. GUYS.. DEATH... FROM ABOVE..!
HOLIDAY HEROES
-:GHNNN:- THERE'S NOT A LOT OF FOLKS WHO CAN KNOCK ME FOR A LOOP--
--BUT NEAR THE TOP OF THE LIST WOULD HAVE TO BE--
METALLO!

I DIDN'T WANT FOR IT TO GO DOWN THIS WAY, SUPERMAN
REALLY. SO, WHEN YOU TRASHED S.T.A.R LABS? THREATENED INNOCENT LIVES?
ZZZRAK
ZZZRAK
ZRRAK
Why do they do this?
WHEN YOU GOT UP THIS MORNING, METALLO, WHAT WAY DID YOU EXPECT IT TO GO?
Metallo. Brainiac. Toyman. Parasite.
GLUSCH
All of them, locked in some kind of ..
THRAK
...what does Lois call it...?
MY FACE--!
..a Never Ending Battle...

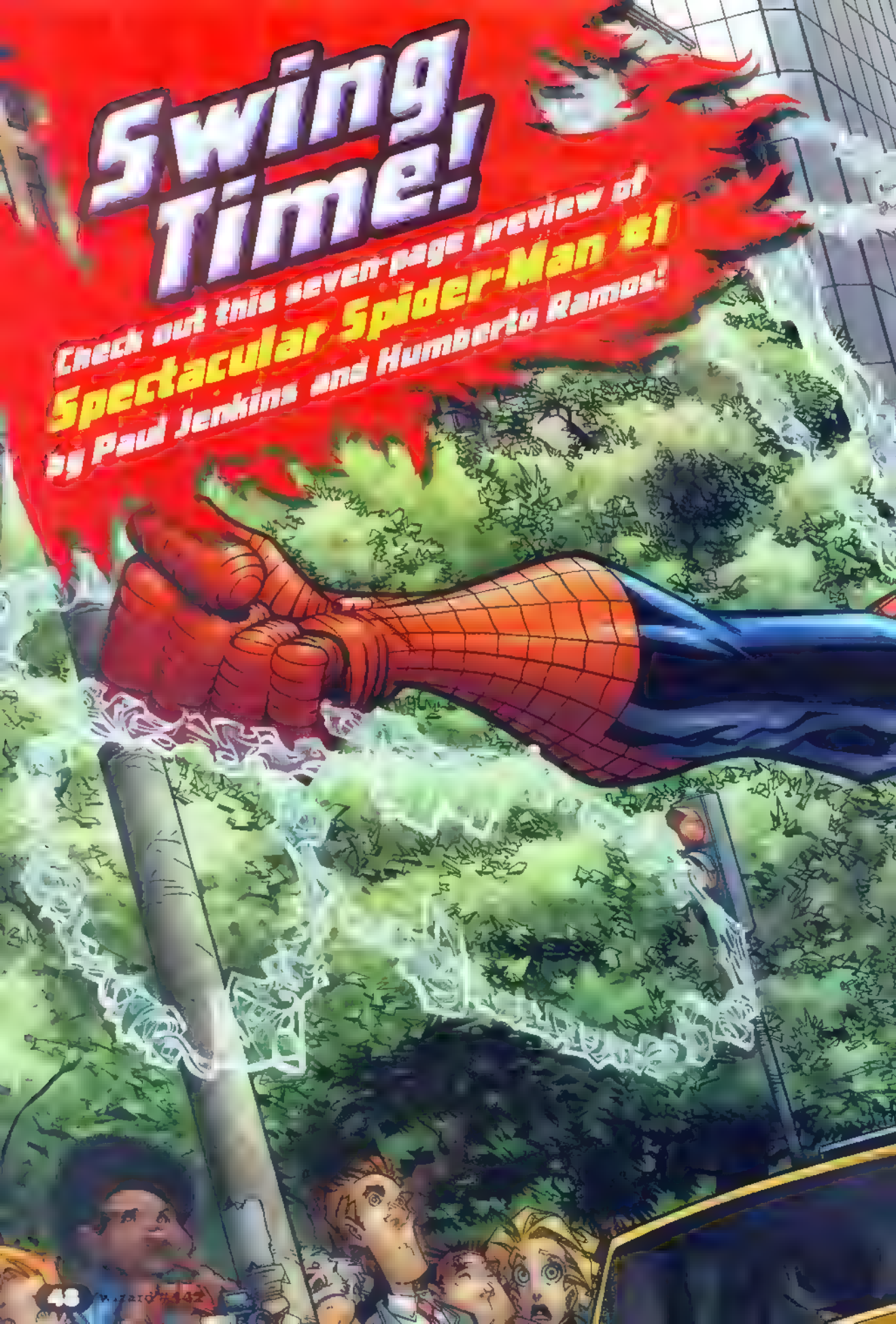
MAYBE I DID CAUSE ALL THIS.
Kryptonite. About the only thing that can actually hurt me.
The last fragments of my birth planet.. and all it brings me is death.
Binding me even more to this world To Earth.
NOBODY ASKED ME TO BECOME WHAT I AM SOME FREAK WITH A KRYPTONITE HEART
BAM
WHAM
AND NOBODY'S GOING TO STOP ME FROM PUTTING AN END TO IT
BJT.. I DON'T WANT YOU DEAD --
--I DON'T WANT ANYBODY ELSE DEAD BECAUSE OF ME EVER AGAIN
SUPERMAN!
YOU NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION --
NO THE SUN.. WILL HEAL ME NOW THAT HE'S GONE
DOCTOR GHERHARD.. CHRISTINE...
...WHAT DID HE WANT?
WHAT WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT METALLO TORE APART S.T.A.R. LABS?

Gotham City Cemetery.
This is the best part of the job.
In the rain. At night. In a graveyard.
Before the police arrive.
Before the crime scene has been trampled and disturbed.
Here. In the silence of the crime...
..I have the best chance to catch whoever did--
YOU.

YOU COULD'VE CALLED
I hate it when he just appears like that.
T WAS FASTER TO FLY N
FASTER THAN A PHONE CALL WE'LL HAVE TO PUT THAT TO A TEST SOMETIME
I'VE SEEN WORSE

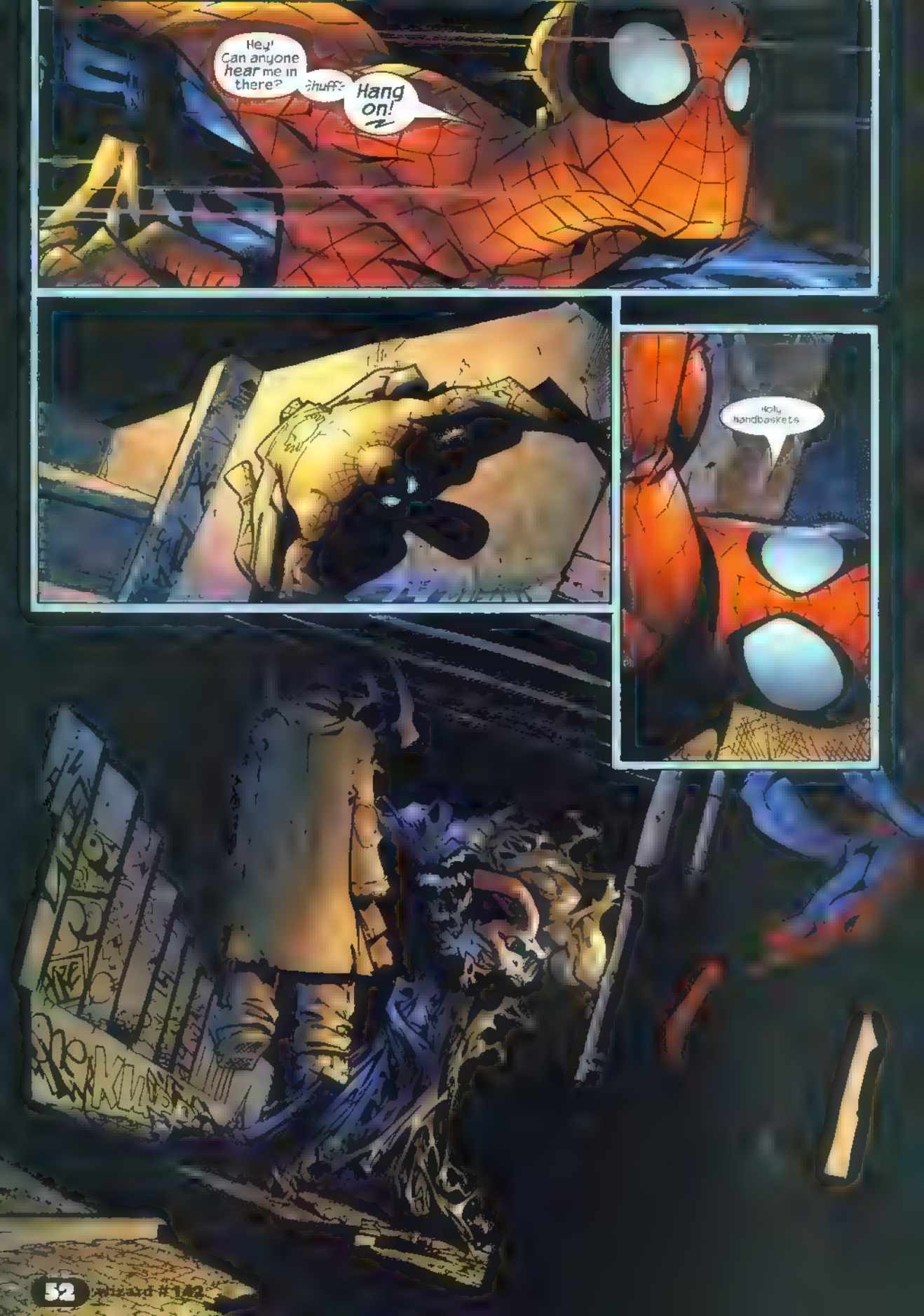
I have to admit. I love being able to do that to him.
SOME MESS YOU'VE GOT OUT HERE
SCARY PART S . . I KNOW YOU HAVE

THE MAN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS JOHN CORBEN.
METALLO
ALLOY BODY 'S BREAK-NG DOWN
THAT WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THE METAL FILINGS I'VE BEEN FIND NG
BUT -- WHY COME HERE -- AND D G UP ALL THESE GRAVES?
CORBEN WASN'T ALWAYS A BRAIN INSIDE A MACHINE
HE HAD A LIFE -- EVEN AS A PETTY THIEF -- THAT ALL STARTED HERE.
IN GOTHAM CITY.
I WENT THROUGH THE FILES AT S.T.A.R LABS. METALLO HAD ONCE BEEN HELD THERE FOR OBSERVATION
WHICH ONE OF US IS THE DETECTIVE AGAIN?
IT IS CALLED INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM.
BATMAN.
CORBEN'S HUMAN BODY -- H S REMAINS WERE -- ARE -- IN THIS CEMETERY
MY GUESS IS HE DUG UP A DOZEN OR SO TO THROW YOU OFF OR AT LEAST SLOW YOU DOWN UNTIL YOU FOUND HIS GRAVE --
--WHAT'S THE MATTER?
Special thanks to Dexter Vines, Dave Stewart and Mark Chiarello
BRUCE --
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORBEN HE WAS N TOWN THE NIGHT--
RRRUMMMBLLE
Check out Superman/Batman #1 on sale August 13!


Swing Time!
Check out this seven-page preview of Spectacular Spider-Man #1 by Paul Jenkins and Humberto Ramos!

I'm supposed to be punching someone
I'm supposed to be sulking, or distracting myself in the company of friends. I'm supposed to be thinking about my friend in the hospital
But instead, I'm here.
GAMES/FAUCHER

Yeah. . I'm here, there, and everywhere
Like a spider, circling a web of energy.
This is how it feels to have another sense.
AAAAAHHHH!!!
When my alarms are engaged like this, every recess of my mind is attuned to my surroundings. The movement of time seems like a taste.
The air pulses with random noises -- little spikes of electrical discharge that strike at my nerve endings.
Telling me that something bad is about to happen


Hey! Can anyone hear me in there?
Sniff
Hang on!
Holy handbaskets

Heads up
Uhh?
Ehh... ahh. . you'd better get out of here, pa. Venom hates it when someone interrupts his dinner. He has very low blood sugar--
WHO COMES... DISTURBS..? UNINVITED.
A FAMILIAR MIND...
Get out of here! Hurry!
I'm goin'! I'm goin'
SMACK!

In the first moment of battle, I feel t. Th s creature that was once a man named Eddie Brock has devolved.
Our psychic link feels like a stab wound. Something has gone terribly wrong with his mind
HMMF!
Where there was greed, now there is terrible hunger. Where there was desire, now there is a burning need
It s not anger anymore . it's frustrat on. unquenchable thirst
Loneliness
But most of all, fear

...SUCH PURENESS AND HAPPY I FEELS AT YOUR RETURN... SPIDER-MAN... SO MUCH HAS I HUNGERED...
...WE IS TOGETHER AGAIN--
...Nnf--... yeah, look, sorry, venom. I know you're after my blood, and all...
... I just don't think I'm your type--
--aah!
... BLOOD? I WANTS YOU.
YOU DON'T WANT I..?
Yeah, well. don't take this the wrong way--
THWIP!
--but that suit makes your butt look big

# STOMPING

## WIZARD visits the studios of INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC, the special effects geniuses who gave birth to the HULK

# GROWD

Welcome to the cinematic birthplace of the Incredible Hulk.

Sure, in the comics, ol' Green Genes was created when Bruce Banner was caught in a gamma bomb blast in the deserts of New Mexico. But in the real world, the Hulk was born on a quiet street in San Rafael, Calif.

There, within the confines of a Hollywood studio's worth of equipment and hi-tech gadgetry, the magicians of Industrial Light & Magic toil away as the hidden architects of the Hulk's journey to the silver screen. Charged with the responsibility of bringing the classic Stan Lee and Jack Kirby creation to life in director Ang Lee's big-budget summer blockbuster from Universal Pictures and Marvel Studios, the ILM crew set out to construct the film's principal character completely from scratch.

"It's a hugely complex character," explains Co-Visual Effects Supervisor Ed Hirsh. "Just from a technical standpoint. Thousands of muscle shapes, hundreds of motions—somebody has to think about every one of those! And above all, the Hulk is an emotionally complex character, and the film calls for a lot of emotional depth."

Not only that, but the computer-generated Hulk had to be convincing enough to hold its own alongside actors like Eric Bana (who plays Bruce Banner in the film), Jennifer Connelly (Betty Ross), Nick Nolte (Dr. David Banner) and Sam Elliott (General "Thunderbolt" Ross).

But they nailed it. Two years after production began, the ILM team has successfully given birth to the most stunningly realistic CGI character in the history of film.

With all the stealth of a bumbling Rick Jones, *Wizard* somehow managed to finagle its way into the ILM studios to spend a few hours looking over the shoulders of the friendly effects folks as they performed their post-production magic.

So before you rush off to your local theater on June 20 to see the Hulk come alive, join us for a "day in the life" glimpse at the origin surrounding the origin. We'll take you behind the curtain to reveal who's pulling the strings, how they're being pulled...and what to do if you find yourself being stared down by a 15-foot-tall, angry green dude.

24.00 48.00 No Character Set

**12:03 PM** The tour hadn't even started, and I was already lost in the magical world of Industrial Light & Magic.

No, really. I was *actually* lost.

ILM's entrance is an unmarked building on an out-of-the-way street in San Rafael, so I can't tell if I'm in the right place. Peering nervously through the glass door, I spy a life-sized statue of an Imperial Stormtrooper towering over the front desk, and I breathe a sigh of relief. Yep, I'm in the right place!

**12:09** ILM Senior Publicist Stephen Keneally greets me with a hearty handshake and ushers me into the building's luxurious screening room—more like a mini-cineplex, complete with theater-quality seats and projector. There, I'm treated to a screening of the first "Hulk" trailer and a montage of ILM's greatest hits, including clips from the "Indiana Jones" flicks and the "Star Wars" trilogy.

I'm disappointed to hear that I just missed Ang Lee's daily visit. Drat! Most directors work in L.A. where the primary editing is being done—but not Lee. He's so committed to his movie that he moved to the Bay Area in October of 2002, just so he could spend time working on the film every day with the folks at ILM!

**12:30** The lights come up, and we step out into the warm California sunshine. The next stop on the tour, the art department, is housed in a separate building. With its collection of 24 buildings and three film stages spread out over several blocks, walking around the sprawling ILM complex is very much like walking through a movie studio lot. Sadly, it's as close as I'll ever get to feeling like a movie star.

**GANG GREEN** Lead "Hulk" animators Jimmy Wheless, Glen McIntosh (pointing) and Tim Harrington (seated) worked tirelessly to bring Hulk to cinematic life.

**12:36** It's quiet within the cozy halls of ILM—not the crazy, caffeine-induced chaos you might expect from an office full of creative geniuses. The lights are dimmed for non-stop computer use, and the atmosphere is relaxed, but professional. No neckties, but no wild-haired mad scientists running around, either. The art department walls are covered with concept art for "Jurassic Park," "Forrest Gump" and "E.T.," and the rows of cubicles are cluttered with posters, Star Wars action figures and toy spaceships.

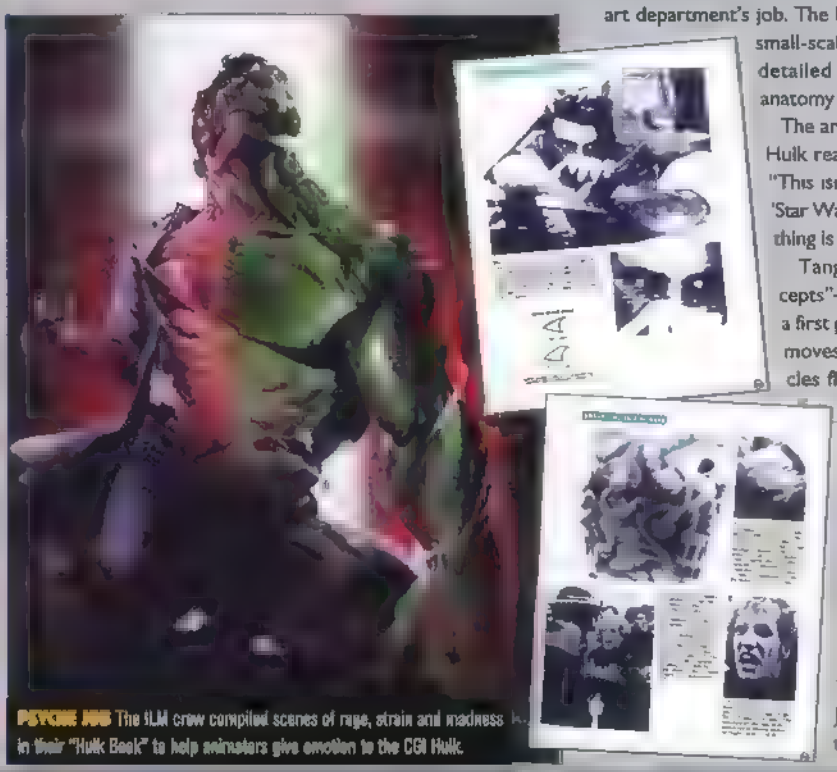
Forget all the super-computers and technology for now—as the art guys keep stressing, it all still starts with pencil and paper.

Wilson Tang, one of the special effects art directors on "Hulk," explains that the Hulk the audience sees onscreen is basically animation placed on top of a computer-generated model, and getting the model to look as real as possible is a big chunk of the art department's job. The Hulk CG model is based partially on a small-scale physical maquette and partially on detailed computer renderings of the Hulk's anatomy and muscle performance.

The art department's main challenge? Making Hulk real enough to hold his own as an actor. "This isn't a bunch of strange-looking aliens in 'Star Wars,'" Tang points out. "The closer something is to human, the harder it is to emulate."

Tang lets me check out 'animated concepts"—a series of pencil sketches done over a first pass of the CG Hulk. As the CG model moves, you can see veins popping and muscles flexing, right down to bone structure. Pretty impressive stuff! It's all in preparation for the Banner-to-Hulk transformation sequences.

Next, Tang shows me Shot BL59, the computer-generated eyeball from the first trailer. Two "before" shots (one of Eric Bana's actual eye, one of the maquette's eye) are combined and tweaked to create a very convincing twitchy green eye. Hulk's face isn't really based on Bana's features. In fact, ol' Jade Jaws more closely resembles the maquette than the actor's mug.



**PSYCHE JOB** The ILM crew compiled scenes of rage, strain and madness in their "Hulk Book" to help animators give emotion to the CGI Hulk.

But get this: The art department came up with a way to actually show what anger looks like inside Hulk's mind! Picture the DNA effects from the opening of the "X-Men" or "Spider-Man" flicks, and replace the DNA strands with neuron-like fibers. Neat, huh? We'll see these "anger flashes" sprinkled throughout the movie, whenever Bana's about to "Hulk out."

**1:30** Okay, now that we know how they made him, it's time to see how they *move* him!

A short walk across the lot brings us to the animation department, where 30 animators bring Hulk to life. I talk with Lead Character Animator Glen McIntosh, Hulk fanatic and huge comic fan!

McIntosh shows me the "Hulk Book," a bound collection of photocopied images and panels from comics depicting quintessential Hulk poses. He pored through stacks of comics to put this book together for the animators to ensure that the film stays true to the character. Legendary Hulk artists Jack Kirby, Sal Buscema, John Romita, Jr. and John Byrne are all featured in the Hulk Book.

As McIntosh explains, signature moves are key. "That's why the final sequence in 'Spider-Man' is so cool!" he says. "Not only does it take the audience along for the ride as he swings through the city, but it incorporates classic poses taken directly from the comics." To that end, the Hulk's "three-mile leaps" got extra special attention to make sure they were done right.

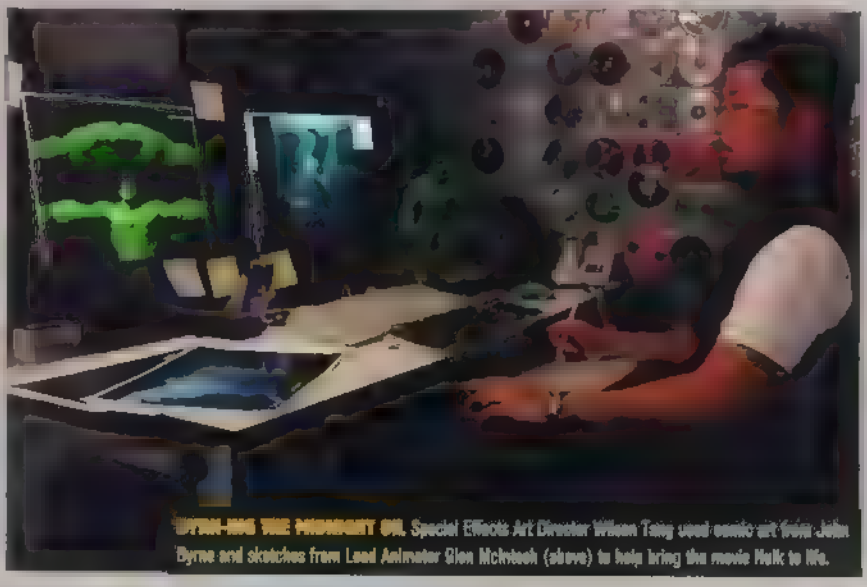
McIntosh shows me an early animation test of Hulk leaping through the desert, along with the final cut of the scene that appears in the movie. Wow! The shot opens with a close-up of the Hulk running at high speed through the desert, kicking up dust and sand. He takes a short leap, then a bigger one, then a bigger one as he gathers momentum, much like an Olympic triple-jumper. And then, he takes off with a monster leap away from the camera, landing with an earth-shattering impact before taking off again. Sweet!

I'm also treated to an extended version of the tank-tossing scene from the first full "Hulk" trailer (the one that ran during the Super Bowl), as well as a scene that shows the Army bombing Banner's childhood home.

My excitement's building faster than the Hulk's boiling rage!

**2:37** Before our next stop, Keneally suggests a quick coffee break. We stop at a quaint little stand in the middle of the lot with the fitting moniker, "Javva the Hutt." Much to my disappointment, the girl behind the cash register was *not* dressed in Princess Leia's slave outfit from "Return of the Jedi."

**2:50** After some java, we head for the compositor's studio, where the different special effects are put together. Stephen takes me to an inner room of the studio with a really high ceiling, where a full-scale mural of the Hulk hangs on the wall to remind everybody just how ridiculously tall the guy is. (Official height in the



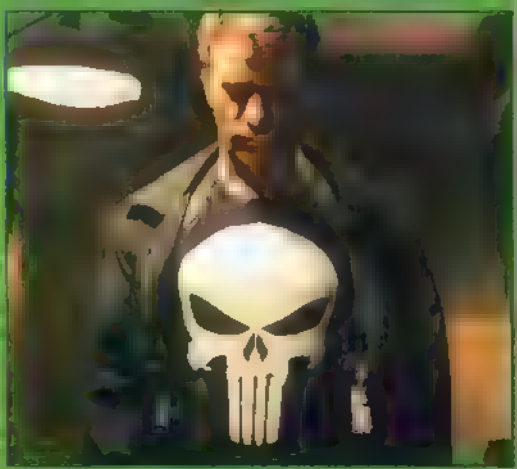
**BEHIND THE MONSTER #4.** Special Effects Art Director Wilson Tang used comic art from John Byrne and sketches from Lead Animator Glen McIntosh (above) to help bring the movie Hulk to life.

# TRAILERS...

[illegible] While filming in underway in New York City and on the campus of Columbia University, it's rumored that actors William Baker (Brown Bobby) and Cliff Robertson (Uncle Ben) have been added to the "Spidey 2" cast (that you say "flashback sequences"?) On the casting front, Daniel Gillies ("Juwanna") has joined the cast as astronaut (and Mary Jane's new love interest) John Jameson, and Dylan Baker ("Head of State") has signed on as Dr. Curt Connors, but don't expect to see the Lizard popping up on the fly. Octopus front, actor Alfred Molina's costume will more or less consist of a dirty lab coat, with his tentacles coming out of the harness on his back rather than his sides. While the tentacles will reportedly have the comic-version three-pronged claws, they'll also have another set of tiny claws in the middle that handle more delicate tasks.

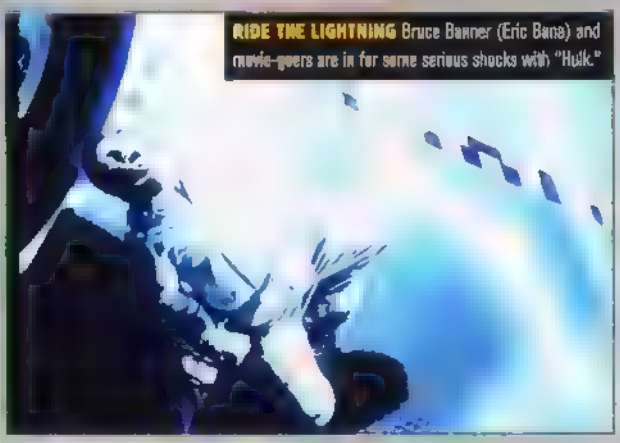
BLADE III Screenwriter (and possible director) David Goyer has completed his script and estimates that shooting will commence in September.

CONSTANTINE Producer Lauren Shuler-Donner has reportedly confirmed a Sept. 15 start date for the Keanu Reeves vehicle based off of the Vertigo/DC *Hellblazer* series.



PUNISHER While Thomas Jane ("Dreamcatcher") prepares to suit up as Frank Castle in the Artisan Studios/Marvel Studios' adaptation, a July 2003 production start date has been confirmed by Marvel Studio's Executive Vice President Kevin Feige. And yes, the Punisher will definitely don a huge skull emblem on his chest this time around.

■ THE WIZARD STAFF



**RIDE THE LIGHTNING** Bruce Banner (Eric Bana) and movie-goers are in for some serious shocks with "Hulk."

film: 15 feet tall.) Even Lee couldn't believe it when he saw it the first time. During filming, Lee used "the Elvis"—a 15-foot pole with a Hulk head on top—to set up shots and establish eyelines for the actors.

**2:55** I meet Compositing Supervisor Marshall Krasser, who gives me the rundown of what compositors do. "We're basically the last people to touch a shot," explains Krasser. "It's like being a cook. We take all the separate elements, put them together, stick them in the oven, and out they come!" In other words, it ain't just as simple as taking the CG Hulk, pasting him into the background of the scene and making sure everything blends together. Compositors have to deal with all sorts of tricky stuff that complicates the compositing process, like lighting-bending, color-scattering and atmospheric effects.

They also get to play around with the CG model, too! Besides perfecting details like hair, sweat and skin pigmentation, the compositors also help Hulk emote. Krasser shows an early emotion test used to see how far the model could go. The compositors took Hulk and matched his facial movements to Jennifer Connelly's movements in a particularly weepy scene. The result? Girly Hulk! Cracks me up every time.

**4:05** The final stop of my tour is the office of Co-Visual Effects Supervisor Ed Hirsh, the guy right below Academy Award-winner Dennis Muren on the ILM totem pole.

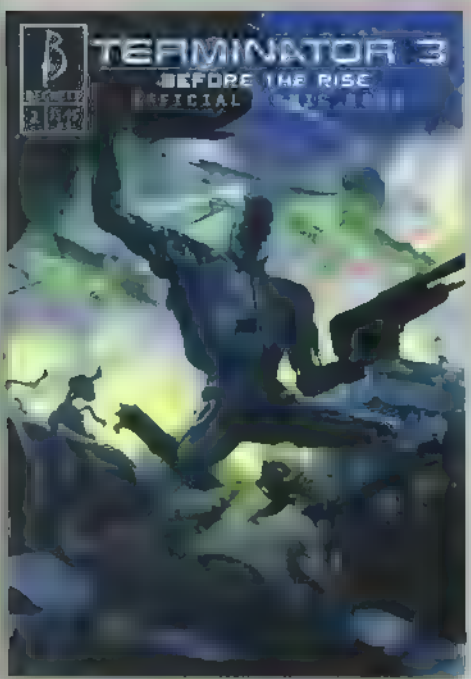
Hirsh acts as an intermediary between Lee and ILM. During filming, he spent most of his time on set, absorbing what the director wanted and bringing it back to his team. "Sometimes it helps to be a little bit removed from the day-to-day, battling it out pixel-by-pixel," explains Hirsh. "So when you look at it, you have somewhat fresh eyes from somebody who's been working on it for eight hours a day!"

At the time of *Wizard*'s visit, production has about seven weeks to go. Of the several hundred visual effects shots in the film, every shot is either finished or in production, and there isn't the sense of panic that usually accompanies the final stages of a movie's production. Hirsh has seen three rough cuts of the film, and as the animatics and storyboards are replaced by final shots, the film gets better and better!

**5:00** And that's a wrap! Before I'm kicked out for good, I take one last look around the lot and bid the fine folks of Industrial Light & Magic farewell. I just hope they don't notice the Stormtrooper gun sticking out of my bag...

*ILM did notice the Stormtrooper gun in Staff Writer Richard Ho's bag, and was swift to deliver a severe and prolonged beating*

# RISE OF THE PUBLISHER



## A Veteran Publisher Attacks Comics with a Big Gun: Arnold Schwarzenegger

There have been *Terminator®* comic books before, but not like this. They've never been so interwoven with the movies' continuity, look, and feel. They've never weighed in at 48 pages in the hefty, feels-like-you-got-your-money's-worth squarebound format.

And they've never had Arnold on their side. "These guys are amazing. They really get Terminator. They have a real understanding of what makes these characters and situations so powerful. It's exciting to see their work expand on the franchise " so says the Terminator himself, superstar actor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"The people at the [T3™ movie] studio have been terrific to work with," says Jeff Amano, President of Beckett Comics, the license holder not only for the official *Terminator* comic book series, but also the official movie magazine. "Plus, Arnold has — for the first time ever — allowed his likeness to be used in a *Terminator* comic. It's a real testament to the talent and vision of the people we have working on this comic."

You'd expect such talk from a company man, but even those who aren't on the Beckett payroll concur. Michael Avon Oeming (who knows just a little bit about such things) has seen the *Terminator* series in advance and raves, "The art speaks for itself. This will be huge."

Who's Oeming so excited about? A smorgasbord of talent culled from the ranks of independent and mainstream comic book publishing, that's who. The new series is written by Ivan Brandon (*Ruule, Gene-Fusion*) and Miles Gunter (*Bastard Samurai*), with art by *Outlaw Nation's* Goran Parlov and *Grendel: Red, White, & Black's* Mike Hawthorne. Beckett even pulled out all the stops on the production process, snagging Daredevil's Matt Hollingsworth as Color Art Director, while Paul Mounts (the man who brings gorgeous, gritty color to *The Ultimates*) is the colorist. And on covers...

On covers, you can look forward to a line-up that includes big-time names like Simon Bisley (*Hulk/Wolverine: Six Hours*), Essad Ribic (*Wolverine, Kingpin*), and Amano himself (*Beckett Yu-Gi-Oh Collector, Best of DBZ*)!

Beckett has the rights to produce an ongoing *Terminator* series, meaning that there will be plenty of robotic mayhem to keep Arnold fans happy between movies. It's also an opportunity to play around in the *Terminator* universe: the first two issues of the series showcase the exclusive prequel to the movie *T3: Rise of the Machines*™ (opening in theaters on July 2) while the second story arc is a unique handling of a movie adaptation. Beckett's movie adaptation is told from a different viewpoint with "deleted-scenes-never-filmed"!

After that? The sky(net) is the limit! For your first glimpse of the future, look to the right and check out some sample pages from Beckett Comics' T3™

EXCLUSIVE PREQUEL TO THE MOVIE BLOCKBUSTER!

**TERMINATOR 3: BEFORE THE RISE #1**
**Coming in June 2003**

Ever since Judgment Day, the human race has lived on the brink of extinction, desperately waging a war it cannot win against Skynet and its never-ending army of Terminators. Now, for the first time, see the people and the world only hinted at in the movies. Could this be the turning of the tide in the battle against the machines?

**TERMINATOR 3: BEFORE THE RISE #2**
**Coming in July 2003**

While Jonah's wife, Alexa, struggles for life in a coma after the Terminator's attack, Jonah finds himself trying to repair the killing machine instead of destroying it! The humans are forced to wrestle with the soul of a machine, and the stakes are bigger than just the future - they're fighting for the past too!

Every issue is squarebound format, 48 pages of breathtaking color!

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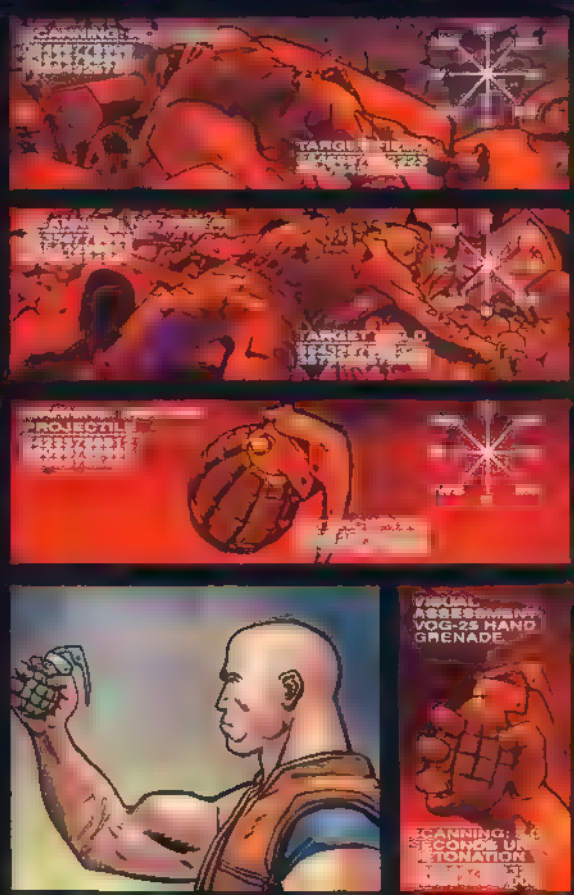


june 2003 at comic book stores everywhere

# HULK SMASHES!

## WIZARD PICKS ITS GAMMA-IRRADIATED BRAIN TO BRING YOU THE 30 HULK COMICS EVERY FAN MUST OWN!

By the WIZARD Staff

The Hulk just wants to be left alone. Too bad everyone wants a piece of him.

It's all about the green this summer. Which comes as no surprise given the major motion picture hitting theaters June 20 and the gamma bombshells being dropped in the Hulk's ongoing title. Hulkamania has reached a fever pitch, and fans are clamoring for any and all things Hulk.

And we're all about the fans here at *Wizard*. So as a public service, we've literally sifted through the hundreds upon hundreds of comics in which Dr Robert Bruce Banner and his perpetually perturbed alter ego have appeared in throughout the years to find the 30 Hulk books that you have to own if you want to call yourself a true-blue (or is that green?) Hulk fan.

We break down the essential stories for understanding what the Hulk is all about. We analyze the aesthetics of Hulk's coolest covers. We give the play-by-play of Hulk's greatest slugfests. We note the Hulk creator milestones. We serve up Hulk's most bizarre moments. We even provide you with a list of Hulk comics to keep your eyes on. All that, and we give you the current Near Mint value of 'em, so you know what you're payin if ya want 'em. So don't say we never gave you nothin'!

And for all you Hulkophiles who just can't get enough of the never-jolly Green Giant, check out www.wizarduniverse.com for 30 *more* essential Hulk books. Then flip over to this issue's Comic Book Price Guide (p. 149) for the 22 Most Valuable Hulk issues!

# TOP 5 ESSENTIAL HULK STORIES

## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK #368

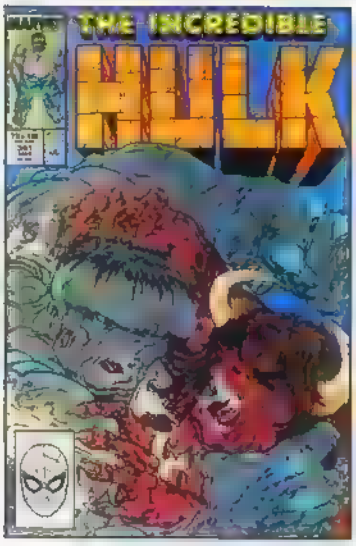
**(1990)** A tale of Dr. Banner and Mr. Hyde. Banner hops aboard a passing train and finds himself sharing a boxcar with the evil Mr. Hyde! In this creepy, Sam Kieth-illustrated tale, Hyde slaps Banner around and waxes philosophical about the Darwinian implications of their alter egos and how "only the strongest survive." Then the sun goes down and ol' Grayskin comes out to teach Hyde a thing or two about strength. **NM Value: $5**

## 4. INCREDIBLE HULK #377

**(1991)** Like the old saying goes, "Two's company and three's a crowd." Especially when all three share a single body. Doc Samson uses hypnosis to force Banner's split personalities–the repressed scientist, the raging child and the sadistic thug–to confront their collective inner demons in this Peter David-penned tale. The issue climaxes in a confrontation with Banner's abusive father that alters the Hulk forever. **$10**

## 3. FUTURE IMPERFECT #1–#2

**(1993)** Hulk is the strongest one there is? Tell that to the Maestro. A tyrannical future version of the Green Goliath, Maestro took over the world after a nuclear war left Earth's mightiest heroes dead and civilization in shambles. An aging Rick Jones brings a young, untainted Hulk from the past to battle his more powerful future incarnation for the fate of the world . . . and his own soul. **$10 each**




## 2. INCREDIBLE HULK #341

**(1987)** What makes a man a monster? The animalistic Man-Bull looks like one, but has the mind of a confused child. The Hulk, on the other hand, is a monster in both body and soul. Looking for a way to become human again, the only thing Man-Bull gets from the Hulk is a vicious beating. Selfish, sadistic and full of rage, the Hulk plays the role of villain in this story, thus proving that monsterhood is more than skin deep. **$11**

## 1. STARTLING STORIES: BANNER #1–#4 (2001)

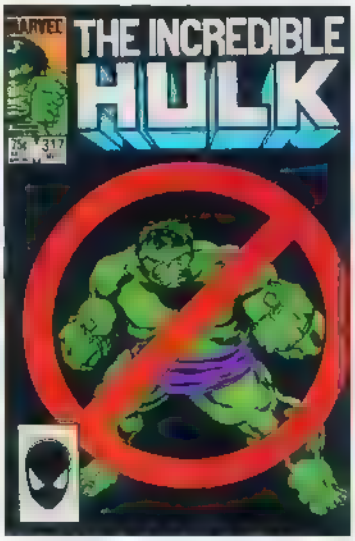
Bruce Banner didn't create the gamma bomb–he *is* the gamma bomb. In this disturbing four-issue mini-series by two-time *Wizard* Best Writer Brian Azzarello (*100 Bullets*) and Richard Corben (*Cage*), the Hulk is designed to be the ultimate living weapon. After escaping from the military, the monster starts wreaking havoc across the country. The Army and Doc Samson try to capture him, but that only leads to more death and destruction, not to mention one of the most brutal fight scenes in Hulk history. Guilt-ridden over what the Hulk has done, Banner attempts suicide. Too bad the monster inside him won't let him die. **$5 each**

– TODD CHERY

# TOP 5 GREATEST HULK COVERS

## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK (VOL. 3) #34 (2002)

What better way to kick off the new direction of *Incredible Hulk* than an incredible cover by incredible cover artist Kaare Andrews? For the cover to issue #34 (the debut of current writer Bruce Jones), Andrews pays homage to legendary artist Jim Steranko's cover to the *Incredible Hulk Annual* #1, but adds tons of detail and vibrant new colors to make his piece far superior to the original. **NM Value: $40**




## 4. INCREDIBLE HULK #317

**(1986)** Sure, the cover to *Incredible Hulk* #316 might not be the most dynamic, and it's probably the easiest cover penciler John Byrne ever did for the series, but the minimalist approach sure made you want to pick up the ish and find out what the heck was going on! And no, it didn't involve the Ghostbusters. A classic image from a classic run by a classic Marvel artist–what more could anyone ask? **$4**

## 3. WHAT IF? (VOL. 1) #45

**(1983)** While a *What If?* story about the Hulk going berserk might not be too thought provoking (after all, when has the Hulk *not* gone berserk?), this stellar cover by Bill Sienkiewicz is reason enough to add this issue to your collection. Never before has a cover portrayed the Jade Giant in a more terrifying manner. It's a face that belongs in a Clive Barker flick. . .or in your nightmares! **$4**

## 2. INCREDIBLE HULK #345

**(1988)** Let's face it: When you're a good 10 feet tall and weigh more than a tractor trailer, a measly 6" x 9.5" comic cover ain't gonna cut it! It's like trying to fit Shaquille O'Neal in a Yugo! The Hulk has never looked more, uh, hulking than on this cover by Todd McFarlane, where he bursts through his own logo on his way to do some serious smashin' The cover alone makes this ish a must-have for any Hulk fan. **$11**

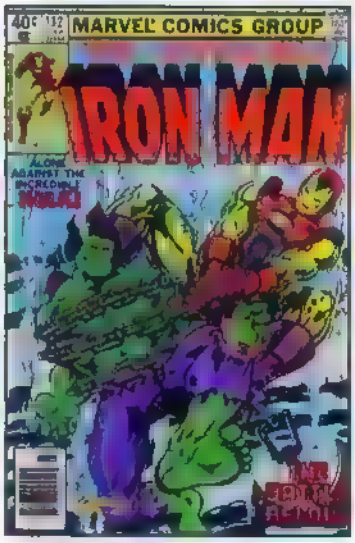
## 1. INCREDIBLE HULK #340 (1988)

Forget "Hulk Smash!" These guys are gonna kill somebody! This Todd McFarlane-drawn masterpiece practically oozes violence and offers us a tantalizing glimpse of the carnage to come. Which, by the way, remains the single most violent, emotionally intense Hulk/Wolverine fight of all time. The elegantly simple cover design puts Wolverine center stage and only gives a glimpse of the Hulk via a reflection in Logan's claws, but that's more than enough to see that the Gamma Goliath is out for blood–and that he's going to get it! No wonder we crowned it the greatest Hulk cover of all time! **$40** ☣ CASEY SELJAS

# HULK'S TOP 5 BIGGEST BRAWLS

## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK #397–#398 (1992)

The Hulk HATES annoying supervillains. So when *four* annoying supervillains (the U-Foes) try to take him out…let's just say it ain't pretty. He's blown up by a hydrogen attack from Vapor, leveled by the living metal that is Ironclad, cooked by X-Ray's radiation bursts, and gets his skin literally sheared off by Vector's super-powerful telekinetic blasts. You just know that's gonna leave a mark. **NM Value: $4**




## 4. IRON MAN #131–#132

**(1980)** Even geniuses make mistakes. Case in point: Tony Stark tries unsuccessfully to cure Bruce Banner of his Hulk problem. Luckily for Stark, his "bodyguard" Iron Man is in the area. Despite his best efforts, the Golden Avenger can't put the kibosh on the rampaging Hulk until he finally puts every last volt of his armor's energy into one knockout blow, sending the monster reeling but leaving Iron Man at death's door. **$4**

## 3. INCREDIBLE HULK #316

**(1986)** Separated from Banner, a mindless Hulk goes on a rampage through a New Mexico town. No worries, because the Avengers (well, at least Iron Man, Namor, Hercules and Wonder Man) arrive to save the day. They lay waste to the town but barely even slow the emerald brute down. Then Doc Samson shows up and convinces the heroes that the only way they can beat the Hulk is to…surrender? **$4**

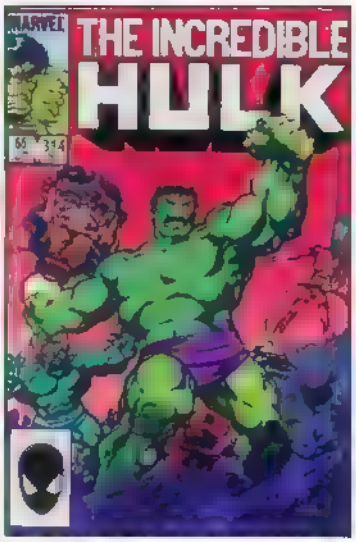
## 2. THE ULTIMATES #5

**(2002)** The Ultimates' first assignment: take down an angry–and horny–Hulk. The brouhaha goes down in the middle of New York City as the Hulk nearly rips Giant-Man's face off, takes Iron Man to the brink of submission, and trades blows with Cap in a fight that made our jaws drop. And if the Wasp can't somehow defeat the monster, then S.H.I.E.L.D. is going to nuke New York! **$7.50**

## 1. INCREDIBLE HULK #300 (1984)

Here it is, the Hulk fight to end 'em all! After leveling a good portion of Manhattan, the greatest heroes of the Marvel Universe team up to battle the mindless, savage Hulk. Daredevil and Spider-Man work feverishly to get civilians out of harm's way, while heroes like Power Man and Iron Fist try to take the fight to the Green Goliath–only to be aside like insects. Then the Avengers arrive to save the day, but even they fall before the brutish berserker's gamma-powered blows. The Hulk stands triumphant, New York looks doomed and the only hope of defeating the raging beast rests in the skilled hands of a certain Sorcerer Supreme… **$6**

# TOP 5 HULK CREATOR MILESTONES

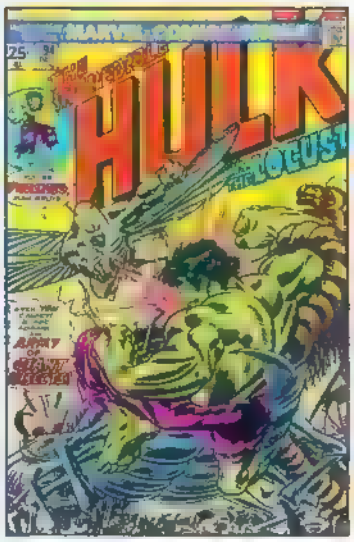



## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK #314

**(1985)** *The Incredible Hulk* was on its deathbed. Good thing John Byrne knew CPR. In a single issue, writer/artist Byrne dramatically altered the personality of Banner and Hulk by actually splitting them into two separate people! This, along with the marriage of Bruce and Betty and all-out slugfests with the Avengers and Doc Samson, made his six-issue stint the beginning of a Hulk renaissance. **NM Value: $4**

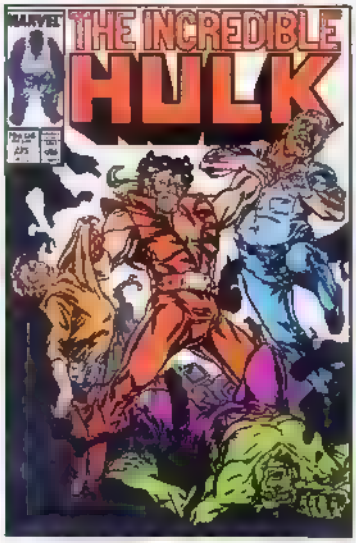
## 4. INCREDIBLE HULK #367

**(1990)** Before drawing the *Pitt* and *The Darkness*, Dale Keown first flexed his artistic muscles in the pages of *The Incredible Hulk*. His first issue featured a weakened Hulk, so Keown didn't get a chance to pencil the brute in all his Herculean glory. But in subsequent issues, his skillful depiction of the brawny bruiser led to a memorable run that had fans salivating for his return to the character with *Hulk: The End* in 2002. **$10**



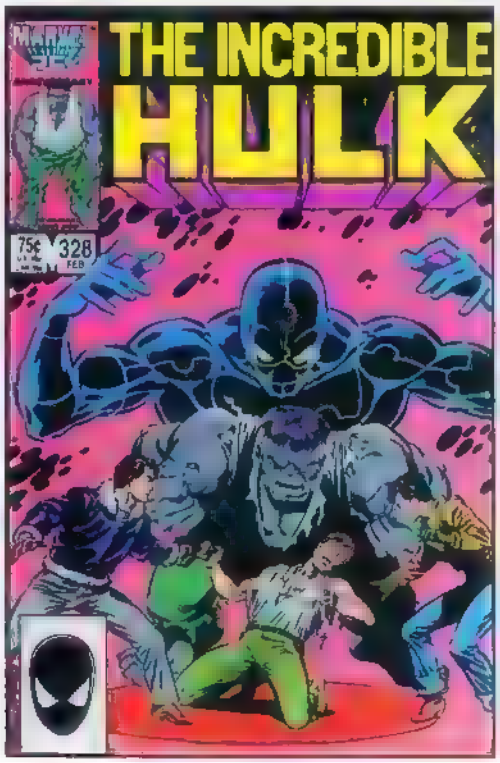

## 3. INCREDIBLE HULK #194

**(1975)** Sal Buscema kicked off his memorable 110-issue run (the longest of any Hulk artist ever) with a rather forgettable villain the Locust. Regardless of the plot, Buscema's energetic action sequences were well suited for a series that was focused on brawling brutes. He also added a new dimension to the Green Goliath with his emotive facial expressions, strongly influencing subsequent artists. **$10**




## 2. INCREDIBLE HULK #330

**(1987)** Todd McFarlane's thick-browed, narrow-eyed Hulk was like nothing fans had seen before, and it helped turn the then-little-known artist into a superstar. The ideal complement to Peter David's increasingly pugnacious characterization, McFarlane's savagely intelligent and sadistic Hulk was the meanest-looking version since, well, ever. **$20**




## 1. INCREDIBLE HULK #328 (1987)

The first issue in a 12-year (!) run, writer Peter David came on board and immediately it was a whole new ballgame. A metaphor-filled tale where the Hulk is likened to a cancer on Banner's soul, the scientist and the monster are forced to come to terms with each other for the first time. In 22 pages, David dug deeper into the Hulk's psyche than any writer before him by portraying the Hulk as less an angry child and more a twisted expression of Banner's own tortured soul. Over the years, David would slowly but surely mold Hulk into one of the most complex and tragic characters in the history of the Marvel Universe. **$5**

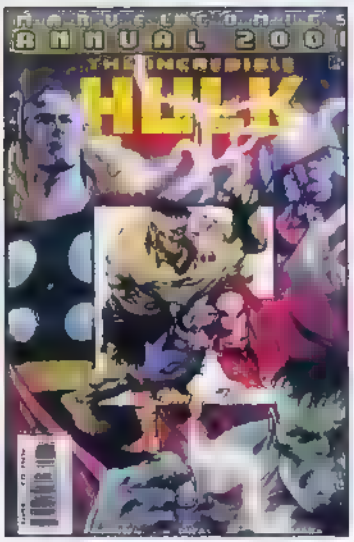
# HULK'S 5 MOST BIZARRE MOMENTS

## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK #396

**(1992)** It's Hulk vs. Doc Ock, Part *Deux*! After Greenskin got his ass handed to him in an Erik Larsen-penned tale in *Spider-Man* #19, regular *Hulk* scribe Peter David retaliated with this issue. Crying "petty larceny" (Get it? Haw!) over their first encounter, a trench coat-clad Hulk merely claps his hands together, disorienting the Doc and setting him up for a final finger-flick of doom. Now *that's* comedy! **NM Value: $4**

## 4. HULK/THING: THE BIG CHANGE **(1987)**

Marvel's biggest, dumbest lugs find themselves transported to the planet Maltriculon to help retrieve the universe's most potent food additive. After finding it, the heroes are rewarded with two wishes. The clueless Hulk blurts out, "We want food and want to go home." Next thing ya know, Thing and Hulk wind up in the middle of the desert on a pile of hamburgers. Ah, the simple life of an idiot. **$10**

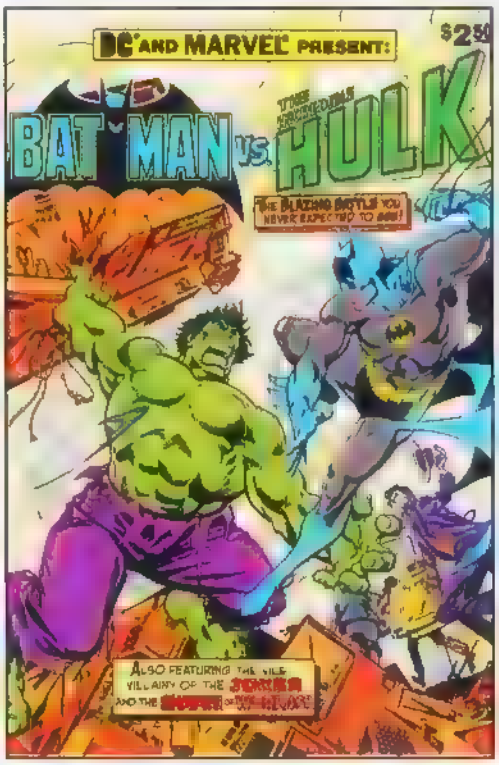



## 3. INCREDIBLE HULK ANNUAL

**(2001)** In this five-page backup by indy superstar James Kochalka (*Monkey Vs. Robot*), Hulk grows increasingly incensed by a rainstorm. At first he tries to play it off: "Rain nothing to Hulk." Then a spill into some mud ignites a truly hilarious berserker rage. "Hulk can smash!" he bellows as he takes a swing at the precipitation. The tale ends with Hulk pitching a fit in a mud puddle. Way to keep your cool, Bruce. **$3.50**

## 2. INCREDIBLE HULK #168

**(1973)** When you're young and can't yet see over the comic counter to eye the nudie mags, you take what you can get. In this infamous issue, Betty Ross allows herself to be transformed into the flying monstrosity known as the Harpy. En route to the transformation, Betty stumbles around totally naked, her naughty bits obscured only by clever shading. Curious stirrings in our purple pants? Yessir! **$15**


DC AND MARVEL PRESENT:
$2.50
BAT MAN VS. THE INCREDIBLE HULK
THE BLAZING BATTLE YOU NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE!
ALSO FEATURING THE VILE VILLAINY OF THE JOKER AND THE

## 1. BATMAN VS. THE INCREDIBLE HULK (DC Special Series #27) **(1981)**

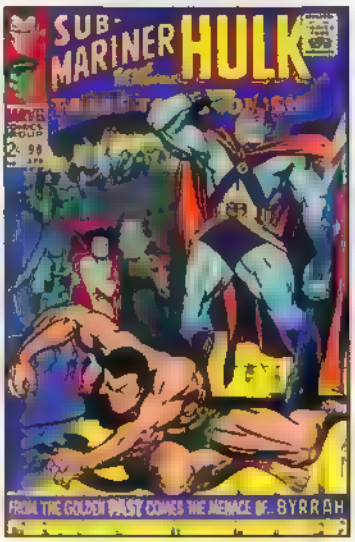
Hulk smash puny human, etc., etc...we know the drill. But in this case, Batman actually lays out the Hulk! The Joker convinces Green Genes that Batman is their common enemy, sending the Hulk on a destructive rampage. The Dark Knight laughably tries to use pressure point strikes to bring the monster down, which only leads to him getting squeezed like a roll of Charmin by the big, green brute. Then Bats gets smart. With the room filling with gas, the Caped Crusader lands a well-placed kick that forces Hulk to suck in air, knocking the beast unconscious. Wayne, you are one crafty (and lucky) mutha. **$30**

BY [illegible]

# TOP 5 HULK BOOKS TO WATCH

## 5. INCREDIBLE HULK #455

**(1997)** The Hulk takes on all of the X-Men on their home turf! Wolverine and the Hulk have thrown down a bunch of times, but how often has Jade Jaws fought the X-Men? Those mutants also had a movie earlier this year making this comic one that features the two biggest comic-movie properties of 2003 in one book! This translates into an easy sale and a definite collector's item. **NM Value: $3**

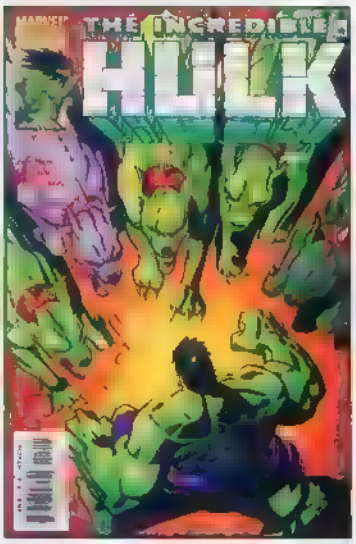



## 4. TALES TO ASTONISH #90

**(1967)** The first appearance of the Abomination, a villain so powerful he once beat the Hulk to death! Though Jade Jaws obviously got better, that–combined with rumors that Emil Blonsky will make an appearance in the movie–makes this a book to watch. The Hulk has few decent enemies and none that even come close to the Abomination. So expect this extremely undervalued ish to start rising in value soon. **$65**

## 3. HULK #1 (1999)

The return of the mindless, rampaging Hulk–by John Byrne no less! There's no way that most Hulk fans can afford the original *Incredible Hulk* #1 from 1962. The first issue of the relaunched current series, however, falls well within the means of even the most cash-strapped fans! **$4.50 (reg), $18 (variant cvr.), $9 (Dynamic Forces variant), $11 (Entertainment Distributors Gold cvr.)**




## 2. INCREDIBLE HULK (V.3) #14

**(2000)** Imagine yourself surrounded by a pack of vicious dogs. Now imagine that they're the canine equivalent of the Hulk! One of the most talked-about elements in the "Hulk" movie–months before it even came out–was the inclusion of Hulk dogs. The gamma pooches first appeared in this very comic and you can expect the movie to help pull back-issue sales of this book out of the doghouse. **$4**

## 1. ULTIMATE MARVEL TEAM-UP #2

**(2001)** The Hulk is one of the fan favorite characters in the red-hot *Ultimates* series by Mark Millar, and his rampage in *Ultimates* #5 is one of the best Hulk battles of all time. But the Ultimate Hulk didn't make his debut in that series, he did it in this one. Here he rampages across New York, fights the army, and hints at a massive conspiracy pulling the strings of the entire Ultimate Universe. This comic also raises some interesting continuity issues for the Ultimate Universe–the Hulk is green here, while he's gray in *Ultimates*. Oh yeah, it also features some character named Spider-Man written by some guy named Bendis. **$3** (W)

**–KARL CRAMER**

*Staffers Karl Cramer and Casey Seijas took on freelancers Jake Rossen and Todd Casey in a rough death match to prove who really is the strongest of them all. The winner? The dog food company we sold their corpses to.*

**TEAM SHOOTER** For a complete list of the characters featured above, go to www.wizarduniverse.com!

# SHOOTER

## Lauded as a comic genius, Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter presided over the most tumultuous—and groundbreaking—tenure in Marvel Comics history

By Mike Cotton

Toiling behind the large desk in his corner office at Marvel Comics' downtown NYC offices late one Friday night in 1986, Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter asked himself, "What's next? What else can we do to make Marvel the most powerful entity in comics today?" As Marvel Comics' EIC for most of the 1980s, Shooter revolutionized the industry by snatching up the top talent, greenlighting intercompany crossovers, launching the creator-owned Epic Comics line, and more importantly, he'd helped save Marvel from what many thought was certain financial doom.

But Shooter hadn't made Marvel a million-dollar omelet without breaking some high-priced eggs. He'd had verbal disputes with creators over stories, with co-workers over Marvel's lax editing system and continuous battles with Marvel's board of directors over bottom line profits. While some saw Shooter's vision of Marvel Comics becoming the next Disney as unattainable, the man himself didn't give up—his dream was not just for higher sales, but better written and drawn comics.

He was still the same fearless leader who had written in an internal memo two years earlier, "Effective immediately, start doing good comics. I realize that this directive reflects a substantial departure from previous company policy, but please try to comply."

Shooter didn't have time to waste being polite—he only had time to think of new ways to improve Marvel Comics and keep the company ahead of rival DC Comics.

"Passion and commitment are very strong elements in a personality and the stronger the personality, the stronger the sparks that will be struck," says Chris Claremont, who changed the end of his classic *Uncanny X-Men* story, "The Dark Phoenix Saga," at Shooter's urging. "Whatever else you want to say about Jim, when he was editor-in-chief, comic book sales rose exponentially and some of the best work of the last 40 years was produced. He forced people to do their best work."

But in reality, there wasn't much else for Shooter to do. Over the past five years, he'd already agreed to a JLA/Avengers crossover, he'd reached out to fans with a candid commentary that no one had seen since Stan Lee sat at the EIC's desk, and he'd shaped some of the most groundbreaking Marvel tales in the company's history, including Frank Miller's run on *Daredevil*, John Byrne's stints on *Uncanny X-Men* and *Fantastic Four* and Walt Simonson's classic run on *Thor*.

In fact, Shooter accomplished nearly everything he'd ever wanted to at Marvel—and it ultimately cost him his job.

## MOVIN' ON UP

As a youngster in Pittsburgh, Shooter never dreamed he'd rise to one of the most powerful positions in comics. In fact, by the age of 12, Shooter had already lived a comic fan's dream.

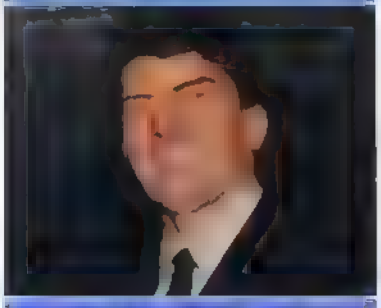
He'd began corresponding with DC editor Mort Weisinger, sending the legendary editor penciled layouts for stories, fully dialogued along with sketches for cover ideas. With Weisinger unaware of Shooter's age, Shooter quickly became his protégé. The two spent hours on the phone every week, often after the "Batman" television series.

Shooter waited a year for a meeting with the DC editorial staff, and after selling a Supergirl story and a *Legion of Superheroes* two-part tale to the publisher, the 14-year-old was finally given the opportunity to walk the halls where heroes were born when Weisinger flew him to New York in 1966.

**SUPER-SCRIBE** Shooter remained a writer throughout his comics career, from his "Death of Ferro Lad" tale in DC's *Legion of Superheroes* (right) to Marvel's 1984 *Secret Wars* maxi-series (above).

## KNOW IT ALL

### Five things you didn't know about Jim Shooter



1 [redacted]

2 [redacted]

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Over the next few years, Shooter became a staple at DC Comics, writing a string of memorable stories for *Legion of Superheroes*.

In 1975, Marvel Editor-in-Chief Marv Wolfman called Shooter to see if he'd be interested in an entry-level editorial position, filling a post exited by Chris Claremont. Shooter immediately interviewed for the job, but Marvel wasn't at all what the 23-year-old expected.

"I walk in the door, and the assistant editor says, 'The new editor's here,' and they hand me a book and say, 'This has got to go out by noon, can you proofread this?'" remembers Shooter, his 6-foot-plus frame crammed into a small chair at a restaurant near his New York office. "And I'm like, 'But I don't work here yet.'"

Wolfman explained Marvel's biggest problem to Shooter: Scripts were being sent directly to pencilers with no editor ever seeing them. Some books were never even seen by Marvel until they were written, penciled, inked, colored and lettered.

Shooter was hired as an associate editor, but he incited the ire of numerous creators working for Marvel. Before he came along, no other editor had the sheer audacity to kick scripts back to writers for tweaks or even complete rewrites.

In December of 1977, as Marvel's publisher Stan Lee became more involved in the day-to-day business of Marvel Comics again, Shooter was tapped to take over for editor-in-chief Archie Goodwin. It was a chance Shooter had waited nearly a decade for.

## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

When Stan Lee announced Shooter as Marvel's brand-new EIC at Marvel's 1977 Christmas party, the room fell silent. Only two people congratulated the new editor-in-chief.

Shooter had two major factors already working against him: One, he would now be one of the youngest (which some people translated to "inexperienced") Marvel EICs of all time, and two, this was the guy who had completely shaken up Marvel's editorial process by demanding necessary changes to scripts and art.

"The old Marvel was three or four people putting together a dozen titles, and then suddenly it's 40 titles and you need a lot more people," remembers Roger Stern, who was hired by Shooter in the late '70s. "But the editorial plan hadn't really grown. There was still one editor in charge of all these titles. When Jim came on, he decided it was impossible for one person to edit all of them. So he came up with the team plan, a more traditional plan, where he was the editor-in-chief and [there were] two editors and a few writer-editors."

**CRASH OF THE TITANS** Marvel and DC's 1982 Justice League/Avengers crossover was heavily hyped, but Shooter had major problems with the script. The project was ultimately cancelled.

George Pérez to even begin penciling the book until a new plot was submitted However, his edict was allegedly ignored, and Pérez penciled over 20 pages before finally being told to stop drawing. As the plot was revised, both parties became short-tempered and the project was scuttled. Marv Wolfman, the man who hired Shooter (and the third writer to work on the crossover), pointed the finger at his one-time protégé

"Jim has gone out of his way to put a wedge between Marvel and every other company," Wolfman told a British fanzine in September of 1983 "He doesn't want team-ups."

But according to Louise Simonson, Shooter wasn't a tyrant—just a man who was so passionate about producing some of the best comics the world had ever seen, placating egos wasn't a concern.

"I think people did take his enthusiasm the wrong way," says Simonson. "[Creators and editors] did think he was mean. After a while, you just get tired and you want people to shut up and do what they're told—do it right and do it the right the first time. I mean, you say the same things 500 times and you figure you've said it enough that people should just do it."

But there were those who saw Shooter as a man with a mission to turn Marvel around and reinvigorate the company

"Some of Shooter's ideas seemed extremely basic—like [stories needing] a beginning, a middle and an end—I think some people took offense because they thought he was talking down to them," says former Marvel editor Louise Simonson, who oversaw *Uncanny X-Men* under Shooter. "But they were perfectly valid ideas and they should be included in every story, [but] they weren't. The people who were the most offended were the people who weren't doing it."

"Jim Shooter was the world's greatest plot doctor," recalls Tom DeFalco, Shooter's second-in-command at Marvel. "A writer could blather on for 20 minutes telling a very disjointed series of events, and Jim would patiently listen, and out of all the nonsense he'd pick out the jewel. He'd use that jewel to show the writer how to tell a brilliant story."

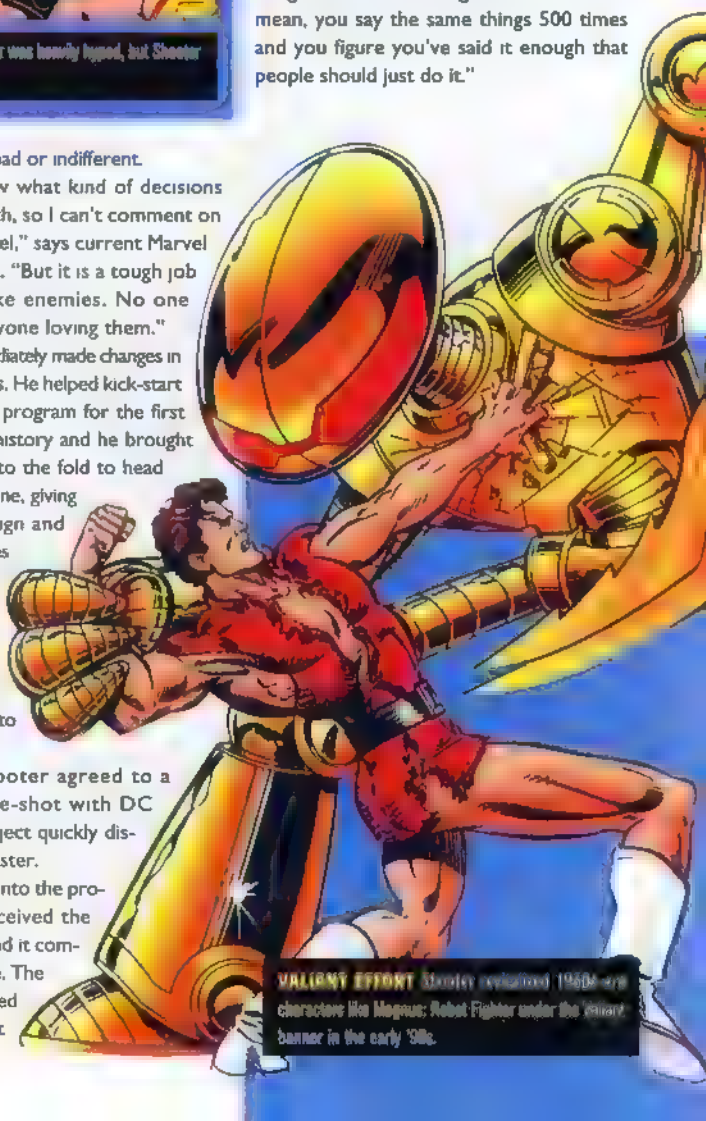
Privately, coworkers and subordinates grumbled about Shooter's heavy-handed ways, but no one dared to challenge him publicly In fact to this day, numerous co-workers—ranging from DC Senior Editor Mike Carlin (who Shooter hired as an editor) to Ultimate Line Editor Ralph Macchio (the last remaining Marvel staffer from the days of Shooter)—refuse to say anything on the record about Shooter—good, bad or indifferent.

"I don't know what kind of decisions Jim was faced with, so I can't comment on how he ran Marvel," says current Marvel EIC Joe Quesada. "But it is a tough job and you do make enemies. No one leaves with everyone loving them."

Shooter immediately made changes in the House of Ideas. He helped kick-start a creator royalty program for the first time in Marvel's history and he brought Goodwin back into the fold to head up the new Epic line, giving creators free reign and equity in the stories they created. Shooter also oversaw comics such as *Dazzler* and *Marvel Fanfare* that only shipped to comic shops.

In 1982, Shooter agreed to a *JLA/Avengers* one-shot with DC Comics. The project quickly dissolved into a disaster.

Four months into the project, Shooter received the first plot and found it completely unreadable. The Marvel EIC refused to allow artist



**VALIANT EFFORT** Shooter [illegible] 1960s-era characters like Magnus: Robot Fighter under the Valiant banner in the early '90s.

# SHOOT OUT

**Marvel's biggest events and projects under Jim Shooter**

**DEFINING RUNS**

**ROYALTY PROGRAM**

**MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVELS**

**SECRET WARS**

**NEW UNIVERSE**

"THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL"

## HOUSE OF 1,000 IDEAS

Shooter's hard-line stance regarding the quality of Marvel Comics may not have won him friends, but it increased sales.

Marvel quickly became the dominant force in comics in the mid-'80s as the company published stories that to this day stand as some of the most memorable comic tales ever.

But Shooter didn't just publish the stories, his direct influence is left on almost every single tale.

In fact, the classic "Dark Phoenix Saga" from *Uncanny X-Men* #135-#137 by Chris Claremont and John Byrne would have been a very different story if not for Shooter's input. Originally, Claremont and Byrne didn't kill Jean Grey.

"When Jim read *X-Men* #137, he didn't think the ending was appropriate on moral or dramatic grounds," says Claremont. "He did not want one of Marvel's premier characters getting away with planetary genocide [shown in *Uncanny* #135]. We put our heads together and I came up with the solution: We'd kill her. And the whole point of it, as we said to Jim, was we wanted to make it stick. If she's dead, she's really dead—we don't bring her back."

Not everyone took Shooter's critiques as well as the *Uncanny X-Men* team, though.

Shooter loved Tony Stark's battle with alcoholism in *Iron Man* #121-#130. In fact, he was so excited about the groundbreaking story that he asked writer David Michelinie if he could read the final script before it was penciled. Shooter didn't like what he read.

"In the last issue, Iron Man kind of reaches the nadir and then he's going to go for the bottle, but he stops himself and he sucks it up and he puts on his Iron Man suit and he beats up the bad guy and then everything's fine," says Shooter. "I said, 'Oh, no, no, no. Here's the deal, Dave...the last half of the story has to be about him beating the alcohol and you've got to show it in a human way. We have to see him go through some rehab, we have to see him have the DT's.' Dave was not happy. Dave was a very proud guy. Well, growling and snarling and pissed off as hell, he grudgingly [changed] it."

The realistic portrayal of Iron Man's battle with the bottle received critical acclaim, and again, Shooter felt that no matter what the cost, he'd accomplished his end goal.

"As time went on, Jim alienated a lot of people," reflects DeFalco. "Jim is a very creative guy and his sole goal was perfection, perfection, perfection. Since he was dealing with human beings, we couldn't always achieve that perfection. Like many creative people, Jim was not the most diplomatic person."

## THE EXIT

Eventually, it wasn't the fights with creators, squabbles with co-workers or even Shooter's hands-on editing approach that lost him his job. According to the former EIC, it was standing up for a decision most creators cheered.

Early in his career at Marvel, Shooter mirrored DC's royalty program, giving

**BOTTOMS UP** The original ending to the "Demon in a Bottle" saga had Iron Man easily giving up booze. Shooter pushed for a more realistic period of withdrawal.

creators a chance to make more money if a book sold well. But as Marvel was being sold to New World Pictures in late 1986, Marvel's board of directors decided to retroactively stop paying royalties, according to Shooter.

"I went from being the fair-haired boy, who was making them all the money, to being a labor leader," claims Shooter. "'Cause I'm up there defending my troops, having screaming arguments and threatening class action lawsuits."

At the tail end of 1986, Shooter resigned.

Marvel, apparently realizing how important Shooter was to the editorial structure, quickly struck a deal with him. Marvel would pay all the past royalties it owed to Marvel freelancers and Shooter would return as EIC with more power than he'd ever had before.

"It was a handshake deal," claims Shooter. "I f---ed up."

After the deal to sell Marvel to New World was finalized, Shooter returned to Marvel looking forward to running the company with little interference. Instead, he was shown the door.

"The day that deal closed, which was Jan. 5, 1987, I went into [Marvel President Jim Galton's] office and said, 'Pay my people,'" remembers Shooter. "And he said, and I quote, 'F--- you.' He didn't care, he had millions of dollars in the bank. I went downstairs and I started to write another resignation letter, but instead I wrote a scathing indictment, which I sent to the new owner."

Shooter was out of a job a day later.

A few years later, Shooter actually raised $81 million in capital with a group of business partners to buy out Marvel, but the deal fell apart. Shooter was no longer a part of the Marvel Universe in any capacity.

"I thought that would be my career for my whole life," says Shooter sadly. "I miss it sometimes. I felt like I was building something and missed what it could have been."

In 1989, Shooter assembled another group of business partners and founded Valiant, which quickly became the third most successful publisher after Marvel and DC.

Shooter threw his hat back into the writing ring with titles such as *Magnus: Robot Fighter* and *Solar*, which were met with critical acclaim. Valiant capitalized on the early '90s comic boom, but after just two years of publishing, Shooter was ousted again.

"They voted to fire me because I didn't want to sell the company," claims Shooter. "They dumped everyone who was loyal to me out on the street."

By the mid-'90s, Shooter had helped found Defiant Comics and Broadway Comics, both of which were based in New York City, but both publishers eventually folded.

Shooter, who'd worked in comics for almost 30 years, was an editor without a home.

## A MAN APART

Today, the 51-year-old Shooter finds himself weighing his opportunities for a potential return to publishing. Shooter considered — before eventually declining — a potential deal with Marvel to write a sequel to his classic *Avengers* story, "The Korvac Saga." He now devotes most of his time these days to writing ventures outside of comics and the occasional small press comic story. But perhaps Shooter's grown out of comics as much as Marvel Comics grew out of him.

"I don't think Marvel's very good right now," admits Shooter. "I think they're way too self-referential and derivative. Back at Valiant, we used to refer to Marvel as the House of Idea. They only had that one, and they kept recycling it. And it's a shame."

Shooter's opinion of DC Comics doesn't fare much better.

"It's a train wreck," says Shooter. "There is no editorial direction there. You get some good stuff once and a while and you get a lot of stuff that is just tepid."

With his current view of Marvel and DC, it seems unlikely that Shooter would ever want to reintegrate himself with either of the publishers that shaped his career. However, the former Marvel EIC who dedicated himself to producing comics of the highest possible quality has left a legacy at the company—a legacy that will always be shrouded in controversy.

"He was very good at what he did," says Simonson. "But the stress of the job got to him. He was probably the best editor-in-chief, in the modern sense, that Marvel's ever had."

*Stress-free Staff Writer Mike Conti is probably the best at what he does now, if only someone could explain just what that is.*

**POWER PLAYERS** Shooter excelled at crafting stories about beings with world-altering power, as he had a hand in killing Dark Phoenix (above) and writing Valiant's *Solar, Man of the Atom* (left).

2003
SUMMER
WOODS
REBECCA '03

# PREVIEW

## Your inside source for the summer's Biggest Events and more than 100 of the hottest titles!

By the WIZARD Staff

Forget the movie tickets, sunscreen and air conditioning; this summer, you're gonna need all the money you can scrounge up just for comics!

Comics' biggest guns are gearing up for the busiest season of the year by unleashing an avalanche of scorching projects guaranteed to put the sizzle in your summer reading. Books like Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee's *Batman* and Brian Michael Bendis' *Ultimate Spider-Man* have been lighting up the industry for months, and the theatrical releases of "X2" and "Hulk" are adding fuel to the superhero fire—and that's only the beginning.

With mega-events like the launch of *Superman/Batman*, the debut of Michael Turner's *Soulfire* and Bendis' highly anticipated *Ultimate X-Men* run on the horizon, things are only gonna get hotter. And guess what? It's *Wizard*'s job to stoke the flames!

We talked to scores of editors and creators to give you the rundown on everything that's happening in all your favorite books. We point out some of the hottest superstars on the rise, and why you should keep an eye on them. And on top of all that, we're kicking this preview off with the inside scoop on the 10 summer events with the biggest buzz that you absolutely *can't* afford to miss!

So kick back with *Wizard*'s Summer 2003 Preview. It's the *only* way to stay cool.

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 10 WONDER WOMAN

August

Greg Rucka (writer) and Drew Johnson (artist)

Greg Rucka doesn't want you to like his Wonder Woman—he wants you to be frightened of her.

"I'm taking a fairly historical, mythological interpretation of the Amazon as opposed to the established DC Amazon," says Rucka, who begins a long-awaited run on *Wonder Woman* with issue #195 in August. "These women scared the crap out of the Greeks. They were the stuff of nightmares to these guys. Diana's going to say and do things that will make people uncomfortable at times."

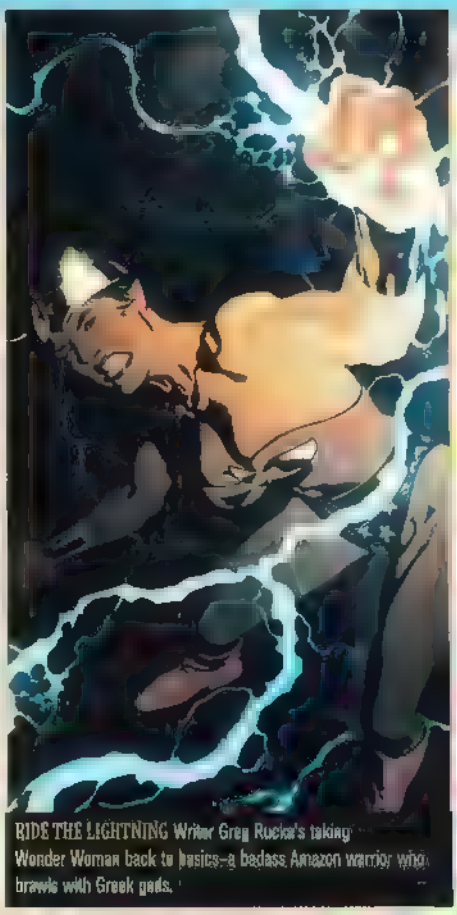
In fact, Wonder Woman will make most of the DC Universe uncomfortable as she invades foreign countries to extradite war criminals, writes a tell-all book and even tackles the subject of homosexuality. She'll also be slugging it out with major villains under Rucka's guidance as well, taking on a very different and very scary Dr. Psycho, Silver Swan and the god of war, Ares.

"We're going to use Ares in a very different way," says Rucka. "A way most people won't expect."

Updating *Wonder Woman* and making her book stand out in a super-male dominated field may be a huge task, but it's one Rucka says he's well prepared for and one Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston would approve of wholeheartedly.

"[Marston] would want to see the character still be relevant," says Rucka, "and he would want desperately to see the character be an inspiration to women, and in particular to young women, which is something that I don't think she really is anymore. But I hope she will be."

Roughly 38,000 copies initially, landing somewhere in the 60s of the Top 100 list. Expect Rucka's early issues to become hot collectibles on the back market as the title's controversial themes attract attention. ■ MIKE COTTON



RIDE THE LIGHTNING Writer Greg Rucka's taking Wonder Woman back to basics—a badass Amazon warrior who brawls with Greek gods.

## 9 TEEN TITANS

Who's July

Geoff Johns (writer), Mike McKone (artist)

Geoff Johns likes to kick it old school, and this summer, class is in session!

After penning successful revamps of characters like Hawkman, the JSA and the Flash's Rogues Gallery for DC, the L.A.-based writer leaped at the chance to tutor DC's junior Justice League, the Teen Titans. However, just because he's writing a bunch of teenagers doesn't mean their missions will be kid stuff.

"There's going to be some new villains showing up, but at the same time you can expect to see some old ones too, like Deathstroke," hints Johns. "[Meanwhile], the team's going to be going through some inner turmoil, and there's a big surprise in store for Superboy at the end of the first issue that's going to completely change the way he sees the world."

Prior to taking on *Teen Titans*, Johns and series penciler Mike McKone (*Exiles*) read up on classic Marv Wolfman/George Pérez *New Teen Titans* issues from the '80s as well as recent runs of *Robin*, *Superboy* and *Impulse*. With a new lineup consisting of Superboy, Robin, Wonder Girl and Impulse (now rechristened Kid Flash) along with older staples from *Titans* (Cyborg, Raven, Starfire and Beast Boy), coupled with Johns' reputation for turning B-level characters into A-list smashes, *Teen Titans* is a surefire cure for the summertime blues!

The kids will be alright, finding a comfortable spot in the Top 20 with 65,000 copies. Throw Johns' name on an all-new #1 issue and it's bound to sell, and with McKone's dynamic take on the Titans, this could be the sleeper hit of the year. ■ CASEY SEIJAS

ROOKIES OF THE YEAR DC puts the "Teen" back in Titans as Robin, Superboy, Wonder Girl and Kid Flash head up an all-new team.

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 8 SUPERMAN: BIRTHRIGHT

July

Mark Waid (writer), Leinil Yu (artist)

Mark Waid wants to make one thing perfectly clear—*Superman: Birthright* is no "Smallville" knockoff

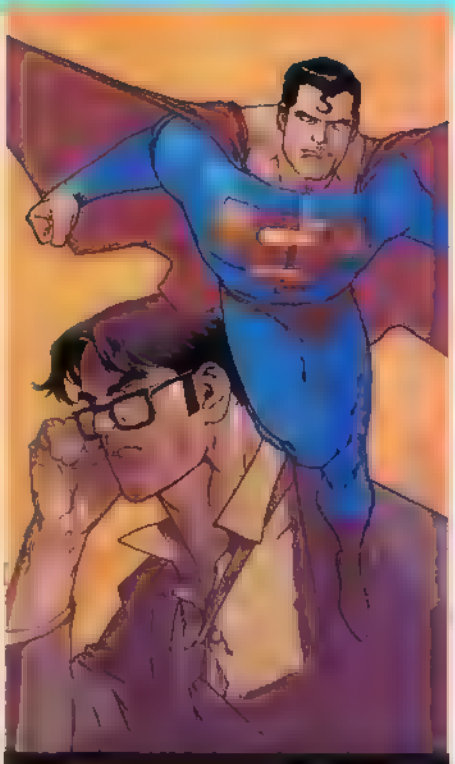
"*Birthright*'s much more than just an homage to 'Smallville,'" relates Waid. "It's the definitive origins of Kal-El and Lex, and how their lives have been intertwined over the years. This isn't just another Superman origin story—it's *the* definitive Superman and Lex Luthor story."

Fans will see Waid back up his words with plenty of defining moments when he teams up with Leinil Yu (*Wolverine*) for the 12-issue maxi-series. The series finds a young Clark Kent and Luthor together on a globetrotting adventure that's not only action-packed, but also answers several dangling questions about Superman's past and his still-developing powers. But Waid is quick to point out that *Birthright* also serves as the perfect jumping-on point for fans that have never given Big Blue a shot.

"Far too often, Superman's been considered a big blue Boy Scout," says the scribe. "This is a story that can be handed to anybody who's asked the question, 'Who is Superman?' The answers are here

"My goal going into this was to show how Superman is relevant to our lives today," continues Waid. "And also to show that, while he's a good man at heart, he still makes mistakes."

With Waid trumpeting the maxi-series as his "dream project" and the triumphant return of Yu's gritty pencils, *Birthright* will find its "right"-ful spot among the Top 15 books, moving 80,000 copies. ■ CS



FROM SIDEBURNS TO SPIT-CORL Superman's early years (and evolving hairstyle) are traced in this summer's *Birthright*.

## 7 1602

August

Neil Gaiman (writer), Andy Kubert (artist)

"Nope, I'm not going to say a word," is all Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada will divulge about writer Neil Gaiman's first Marvel work in almost a decade

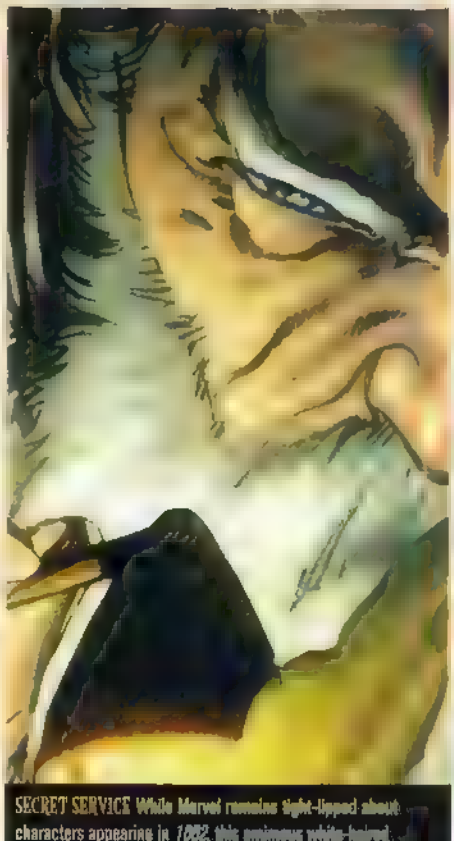
"It going to be a superhero comic…kind of," Gaiman teases of the series that supposedly will feature almost every character in the Marvel Universe in some way "At first glance, it might look like an 'Elseworlds' or a *What If…?*, but it's not. It's actually going to be a real story with real consequences. But it will also be self-contained

"There's a wild lunacy to this project, which I'm really looking forward to," Gaiman ecstatically continues. "And these are all characters I've never done anything with, and there's a certain joy to going, 'Oh, how about Nick Fury? Yes…okay, he works, and oh, Doctor Strange and the X-Men .. and the Avengers!' It's fun to, in some ways, reinvent the Marvel Universe."

While details of the series are shrouded in more mystery than the success of "Kangaroo Jack," one thing is certain—Marvel's going all-out to protect the secrecy of the story

"We actually hired a guard to stand watch at night after everyone's gone to make sure no one snuck in to read the script," says Quesada. "In fact, when Andy [Kubert] finishes a page, he sends it directly to [colorist Richard] Isanove to make sure no one ever sees it."

With Gaiman's clout and rabid *Sandman* fan base, along with the *Origin* art team of Kubert and Isanove, expect a top 10 debut with sales somewhere in the range of 90,000 copies. ■ MC



SECRET SERVICE While Marvel remains tight-lipped about characters appearing in *1602*, this ominous white-haired chap sure looks familiar!

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 6 SUPREME POWER

August

J. Michael Straczynski (writer), Gary Frank (artist)

Absolute power corrupts absolutely—but what happens with *supreme* power?

J. Michael Straczynski aims to answer that question in *Supreme Power*, his mature readers take on Marvel's JLA-like team, the Squadron Supreme.

"I wanted *Supreme Power* for the title because it echoes that famous adage," explains Straczynski. "So, if absolute power corrupts absolutely, how much more prey to corruption is supreme power?"

Though the ongoing MAX title is geared towards mature readers, don't expect tons of unnecessary blood and guts. "I'm not big on gratuitous sex, language or violence," says Straczynski. "Where it makes sense, where it's real, I'll use it." Above all, the scribe plans to stick to the original series' emphasis on realism. "What would happen in the real world if these powerful people began showing up?" asks Straczynski. "I'm treating it as realistically as I humanly can, taking it to a level of complexity I didn't have the chance or the experience to take it to in *Rising Stars*."

*Supreme Power* will differ from writer Mark Gruenwald's original 1985-1986 *Squadron Supreme* maxi-series in one regard.

"Mark's book picked up *in media res*, with the characters in place," explains Straczynski. "I wanted to track their story from the arrival of Hyperion [the group's leader] as an infant, and how that event not only changes the world, but in many ways is a direct causal link to the rise of the other characters."

Top 10 at 100,000 copies. *Rising Stars* made JMS a huge name, as evidenced by the huge sales *Amazing Spider-Man* enjoys every month, and this latest offering promises to break even more ground. It's no secret that Straczynski commands supreme sales power. ■ RICHARD HO

**SQUADRON-VILLE** In one of *Supreme Power*'s opening sequences, a Kent-ish couple discover the crashed ship of an infant Hyperion.

## 5 SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN

July

Paul Jenkins (writer), Humberto Ramos (artist)

For the *Spectacular Spider-Man* duo of Paul Jenkins and Humberto Ramos, it's déjà vu all over again.

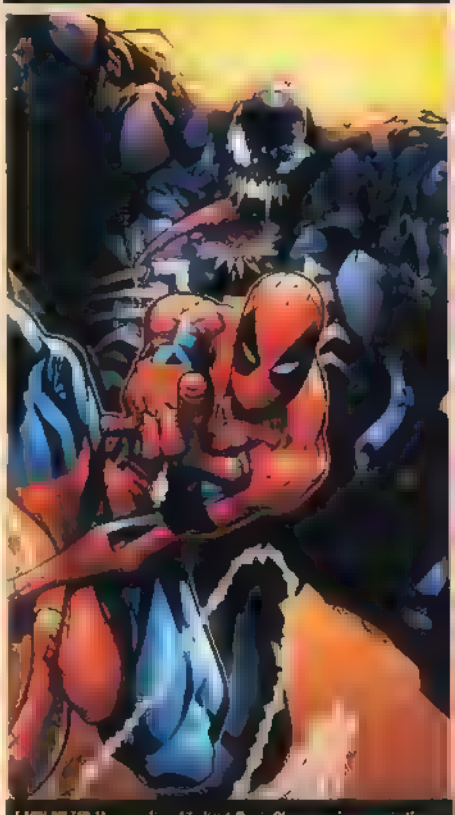
Longtime *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* writer Jenkins first joined with red-hot artist Ramos on *Peter Parker* #44, and the combination of Ramos' kinetic style and Jenkins' emphasis on Spidey's colorful supporting cast revitalized the title and sent fans into a frenzy, propelling the issue onto the Hot 10 Comics list.

"The response [to that storyline] was just incredible!" gushes *Spectacular* Editor John Miesegaes. "It was just something that everybody wanted to see. Humberto was born to draw Spider-Man—his style fits the character really well, and he gets the intensity and the humor that Paul puts into his scripts."

Which is why the relaunch of *Spectacular Spider-Man* (**see the preview on page 48!**) figures to be business as usual. And sure enough, despite the freedom of a new #1, Jenkins and Ramos plan to stick with what works. "We want to harken back to the Stan Lee/Steve Ditko years, where you have these really cool villains," explains Miesegaes. "We're basically taking old villains that he's been battling all these years and getting back to the heart of what made them so popular in the first place. That's something that Paul's really good at, and we'll see it with the Venom arc [that kicks off with issue #1]."

Adds Jenkins, "We know *what* has happened with a lot of these characters. Now I think fans want to know *why* they do the things they do."

Top 15 at 80,000 copies. Both Marvel and Spidey fans know a good thing when they see it, and the fan-favorite combination of Jenkins and Ramos on an all-new Spider-Man #1 will keep summer Spidey mania alive, even without a new movie this year! ■ RH



**LICK IT UP** Venom does his best Gene Simmons impersonation when he and Spidey clash in the first *Spectacular Spider-Man* arc.

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 4 BATMAN

June

Jeph Loeb (writer), Jim Lee (artist)

Harvey Dent (a.k.a. Two-Face) is the mysterious villain known as Hush, Batman will once and for all rid the streets of Gotham of crime, and Bruce Wayne and Selina Kyle will hang up their spandex and live happily ever after

Go ahead—believe what you've read in *Batman* lately. After all, that's exactly what series writer Jeph Loeb *wants* you to think!

"If anyone has learned anything from this story, it is that nothing appears to be what it is," hints Loeb.

For fans that have read Loeb's epic Batman mysteries *Long Halloween* and *Dark Victory*, having the superstar writer lead you to one possible ending then completely flipping it is commonplace However, with the current "Hush" storyarc, Loeb's taken his trademark surprises to a whole new level. Heck, he's even managed to leave DC's Dark Knight Detective scratching his head as to exactly who the mystery villain is!

And as the arc continues this summer, Loeb promises the twists and turns aren't even close to over for Bats!

"Judging by what Jim and I have read on the message boards, there are elements and loose ends that folks haven't even picked up on yet," says Loeb. "I will say that there are some twists coming up towards the end of the story that are gonna have an awful lot of people talking. Keep reading, everything will be explained."

As if Batman hasn't had his hands full with the cast of rogues who have shown up in "Hush" so far (as well as an all-out slugfest with a certain Kryptonian), Loeb and Lee plan on hitting Batman with even more villains and momentous events before the story concludes in October's *Batman* #620. That means fans can expect more events like the ultimate Batman/Joker fight in issue #614 and Batman revealing his secret identity to Catwoman in issue #615. With June's #616, Bats squares off against not only the immortal Ra's Al Ghul in his hunt for Hush, but also a trio of temptresses including Talia, Lady Shiva and Catwoman. Then, in July's issue #617, Robin makes his way into the pages of "Hush," but the reunion definitely won't be happy as the Boy Wonder confronts his mentor on his budding romance with Catwoman

Despite the fact that Loeb and Lee have taken the Bat to the big-time (we're talking about the No. 1-selling book four of the past six months), the two superstar creators are genuinely surprised at the success and recognition their run has garnered

"The fact that this has blown away people's expectations of whether or not the books will come out on time, what the characters will look like—has made it a very unique event," says Lee. "To me, the buzz and the hype our run has garnered, it's just unbelievable."

As the hottest run in comics draws closer to its shocking conclusion, expect sales to reach a fever pitch over the summer as fans scramble to complete their runs. We wouldn't be surprised if Loeb and Lee's *Batman* continues to take one of the top two spots, moving at least 110,000 for each subsequent ish ■ CS

**SPEECH IMPEDIMENT** Expect even more shake-ups for Batman during the "Hush" saga as Ra's Al Ghul stirs up trouble.

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 3 SOULFIRE

WINNER OF THE ASPEN ENTERTAINMENT READER POLL!!

August 2003

Jeph Loeb (writer), Michael Turner (artist)

The fans have spoken…and *Soulfire* blazes to victory!

After four months of intense neck-and-neck voting to determine which of Michael Turner's upcoming Aspen projects would be produced first, the results have been tallied, and *Soulfire* (formerly known as *Dragonfly*) barely beat out *Ekos* by just over 200 votes.

"I was really thrilled to hear that *Soulfire* won!" gushes Turner. "Of course, I feel very strongly about both projects, and I was looking forward to drawing either one." But now that he knows what the fans wanna see first, Turner's ready to start focusing all his energies on one book. "I've started doing final designs for the dragon and some of the secondary characters," says Turner. "I think *Soulfire*'s going to be completely different than what a lot of people expect. It's not just a futuristic dragon slayer-type story—it's got a lot of little twists and turns."

One of those turns will be a heavy dose of fantasy. "But it doesn't really fit into the 'Dungeons and Dragons' mold, and it doesn't fit into the 'Lord of the Rings' mold, either," warns Turner. "It's a futuristic, realistic fantasy story. Think *Final Fantasy* with dragons, throw in a realistic glimpse of what the future would look like in 100 years, and you've got *Soulfire*. Jeph Loeb and I have been talking about lots of cool stuff, and we're really looking forward to both spreading our wings!"

SOUL SUCCESS Fire-breathing dragons, hot babes and boys who like to read—which one seems out of place?

The series—which will run between six and 10 issues, depending on how Turner decides to pace the story—will feature the two characters introduced in *Wizard* #139's exclusive preview: the young boy named Malikai and his beautiful mentor, Grace. But when it comes to story details and the rest of the supporting cast, Turner's sticking to the element of surprise.

"I want to keep all of that secret!" teases the artist. "Certain characters will be introduced in really cool ways, so I don't want to reveal too much—who they are, whether they're good or bad."

As for the future? Following *Soulfire*'s initial run, Turner plans to churn out several smaller projects before jumping over to *Ekos* with writer Geoff Johns. After that, anything's possible—including ongoing launches for both titles. But right now, nothing's set in stone.

"That's still a year and a half away!" laughs Turner. "I just don't know yet. First, I want to see the response for both series. I want to see where the company is, and what I'm happy doing. If *Soulfire* comes out and does gangbusters and sells 100,000 copies every single month, maybe I'll go back and do another *Soulfire* immediately, and maybe get somebody else to draw *Ekos*.

"I want to do what we started out doing in the beginning with this whole thing: get the fans involved, see what they like and give them what they want."

Top five at 115,000 copies. You've got Turner, one of the hottest artists in comics, returning to a monthly book after a three-year absence and launching a brand new company, to boot! And let's not forget Jeph Loeb—we hear fans dig that other book he writes. ■ RH

# 2 SUPERMAN/BATMAN

August 2003

Jeph Loeb (writer) Ed McGuinness (artist)

When it comes to *Superman/Batman*, Jeph Loeb and Ed McGuinness have history on their side.

The duo's brand-spankin' new series **(for an exclusive preview, see p.34)** teams the DCU's top dogs in a monthly series for the first time since *World's Finest* ended in 1986, and with the added history of one of the most kickass *Superman* creative teams in years returning to the character they reinvigorated, the star-studded summer event boasts all the ingredients of history in the making.

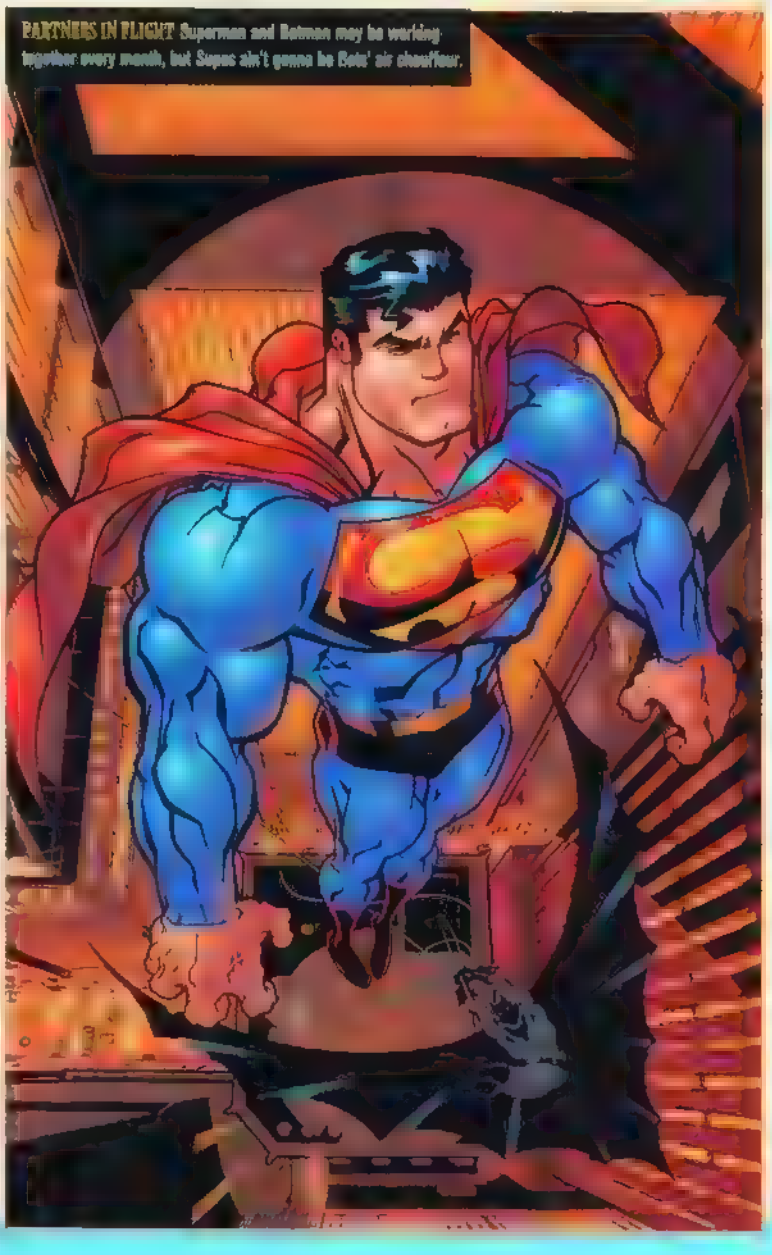
And boy, does it kick off with a bang! "The story is about taking down Lex Luthor," explains Loeb. "It's a very complicated issue—particularly in these times, where if the President of the United States tells you to go to war, you go, whether you agree with it or not. So we essentially have to answer the question, how do you destroy Lex Luthor without destroying the world?"

Given the golden opportunity to play with both the Man of Steel and the Dark Knight in his storytelling sandbox, Loeb plans to draw on the shared history between the characters to further define their relationship. "These are two characters who have clearly worked together for over 50 years—at least in real time," explains Loeb. "And while they don't do things the same way, they still want the same thing. Superman plays things closer to truth, and Batman plays things closer to fear, but at the end of the day, it's all about stopping the bad guy. They're like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, or like the characters in 'Lethal Weapon.' They are the best at what they do—they just do things differently."

Which brings up an interesting question: With both Supes and Bats on the same title, how did DC decide which character's name to put first? "It really was very simple, since the idea for this book originated in the Superman office," reveals Loeb. "In fact, when McGuinness and I left *Superman*, it was to do this book. The only question in anybody's mind was whether or not to call the book *World's Finest*."

In the end, DC decided to display the famous emblems of both characters on the cover, in place of actual text. "Which I think is the coolest thing in the world!" gushes Loeb. "My personal preference is that the book be called both *Superman/Batman* and *Batman/Superman*. It's certainly going to feel that way, because I don't think anyone's going to read it and say, 'This is a Superman book,' or 'This is a Batman book.' Hopefully, they'll read the book and say, 'This is a story about two guys who handle the situation very differently, and it's exciting to see how they ultimately build their friendship around their work."

No. 1 at 125,000 copies. Nine months into his smokin' *Batman* run, Loeb enjoys a reputation as one of the hottest writers in the industry, and with former partner in crime McGuinness providing pencils, expect the biggest, baddest team-up tales this side of *JLA/Avengers*. ❑ RH



**PARTNERS IN FLIGHT** Superman and Batman may be working together every month, but Supes ain't gonna be Bats' air chauffeur.

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

## 1

## ULTIMATE X-MEN

June

Brian Michael Bendis (writer), David Finch (artist)

Brian Michael Bendis finally returns to the book he never wrote.

"I was supposed to launch *Ultimate X-Men* when it first started, but I just couldn't figure it out," recalls Bendis. "It takes a very specific talent to write team books—like Geoff Johns and Mark Millar are great at team books—and I just felt I wasn't ready yet. I had a bunch of ideas but they were all scattered about. It's like I was cooking a stew, and it needed to simmer for awhile."

Bendis' X-broth has had to simmer for nearly three years, but this June, fans will finally see his long-awaited debut on *Ultimate X-Men* with issue #34, where he'll team with up-and-coming penciler David Finch (*Call of Duty: The Brotherhood*). Although Bendis hints that his initial six-issue storyarc will focus on the team and Wolverine especially, he's quick to point out that just because the title has "X-Men" in it, don't expect his arc to be limited to those characters

"The story revolves around Wolverine, and it'll build on some of the themes [former *Ultimate X-Men* writer Mark] Millar established in his run," hints Bendis. "There will be appearances by Spider-Man, Daredevil, some of the Ultimates will show up, and of course the X-Men. It's a very action-oriented story, and I think a lot of people who read *Daredevil* and *Alias* are in for a surprise at how big the action is."

Bendis' first published *Ultimate X-Men* story has been brewing for some time now, although he's quick to point out that this story is *not* the original pitch for the series launch. That said, while the X-Men will play a vital role in the book, Bendis plans on using another Ultimate character as a major player that both he and Wolverine are all too familiar with.

"I always had this idea for a Spider-Man and Wolverine story, but I could never find an appropriate place to tell it," says Bendis, who teamed the characters twice before in *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up* #1 and #11. "I really like the relationship between Ultimate Spider-Man and Ultimate Wolverine, because Peter Parker's 15 years old, so Logan's probably the coolest guy he's ever met. It's like meeting Clint Eastwood to Peter. Meanwhile, Logan just treats him like dirt.

"And you'll get to see a team-up set-up that you've never seen before," continues Bendis. "This isn't the typical, 'Oh we happened to fly by each other on the rooftop somewhere.' It's something you definitely haven't seen before, and I hope people dig it."

While Bendis has decided to keep any major villains on the down-low for the time being (turn to **p. 113** for info on Bendis' upcoming all-villains mini-series), he's quick to point out that one of the major villains Wolverine will have to face is himself.

"Logan has a past that comes back to haunt him a lot," says Bendis. "He's a guy who wakes up every morning and realizes that, in his past life, he probably wasn't a very nice guy. He's the a--hole of his own story! He's trying to repent now, but things always come back to him."

Although his initial run is scheduled for just six issues, Bendis mentions that he's been so impressed by Finch's art, there's a strong possibility he may keep his mutant mojo workin' after his initial run

"I won't be writing *Daredevil* for the six months I'm on *Ultimate X-Men*," says Bendis. "I'm doing this run for fun, but after working with Finch and seeing his art, I'm definitely considering sticking around."

Bendis, combined with the X-Men, combined with Spider-Man? Has there ever been any more of a sales no-brainer? Expect to see Bendis and Finch's *Ultimate X-Men* run to find a permanent residence at the No. 1 spot, selling between 130,000 to 140,000 copies every month. Plus, with Bendis promising cameo appearances by the rest of the Ultimate Universe as well, this has the potential to be the biggest Ultimate crossover since *Ultimate War!* ■ CS

# TOP TEN SUMMER EVENTS

NEW KID IN TOWN When Brian Michael Bendis takes over *Ultimate X-Men*, Wolverine and Spider-Man must join forces after Logan's riddled with bullets (left).

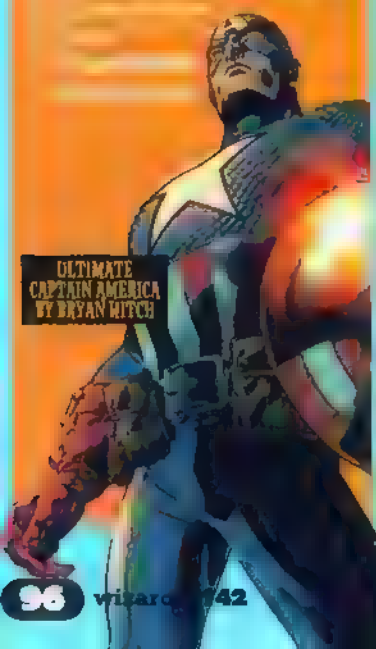
BEST WRITER

BEST ARTIST

(OR) FOR YOU'D LIKE TO SEE MORE WORK FROM

[illegible] ON THE MARKET

COOLEST CHARACTER



[illegible] (Marvel)

This is what you've been waiting for! Writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Michael Gaydos unveil Part 2 of "The Secret Origin of Jessica Jones" in June's issue #23. Readers will discover what motivated Jessica to become a superhero, leading directly into the six-issue "Purple" arc, which finally reveals why she *stopped* being a superhero. "It's been haunting the entire series," says Bendis. "This way, it's the first chapter of the superhero and the last chapter in one big arc." The classic Avengers, Luke Cage and the Defenders all guest star, and Bendis promises an earth-shattering payoff. "It's one of Marvel's dark secrets that you've never heard!"

[illegible] (DC)

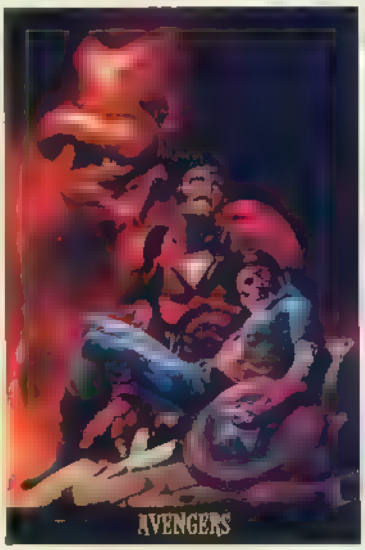
Writer Rick Veitch and artist Yvel Guichet send Aquaman on a swashbuckling adventure in June's issue #7, which finds the former King of Atlantis fighting off a band of undead buccaneers who are attempting to poison the Rhine River. In issue #8, Aquaman receives help from a very unlikely—and top-secret—ally. In issue #9, Aquaman and his reluctant compatriot join forces to take down the Thirst, who continues to raise undead armies against Aquaman in a story running throughout issue #11. Finally, a major event will be revealed in November's issue #12, but Aqua-fans will have to wait until fall, 'cuz DC's remaining tight-lipped with the details.

[illegible] (Aspen Entertainment)

Starting in June, Michael Turner publishes his first Fathom story under his creator-owned Aspen banner. *Aspen Comics* #1-#3 each contains 12 pages of Turner's final *Fathom* arc as well as sketches from his next series, *Soulfire*. *Aspen Comics* will answer questions surrounding *Fathom* and introduce new characters. "[The first] story introduces an underwater ninja girl named Kiani," says Turner. "She is badass! You're going to see hints as to why the Paradise disappeared, why all that time was lost, you're going to see hints as to why Aspen has her abilities, and you're going to see hints at her past."

[illegible] (WildStorm/DC)

The current "Reality Incorporated" storyarc, written by newcomer Robbie Morrison with art by Dwayne Turner (*Spawn*), soldiers on in June's issue #2 of the relaunched *Authority* series and comes to its shocking conclusion in August's issue #4. The Authority is pushed to their limits by interdimensional suicide bombers and soon learns that a nefarious multi-level corporation is behind the attacks. Then, September's *Authority* #5 kicks off a new storyarc titled "Godhead," which finds the heroes facing off against a cult that has infiltrated all levels of human society—from the wealthy to the poor—and even the superhuman!




[illegible] (Marvel)

June's issue #68 by writer Geoff Johns (*JSA*) and penciler Olivier Coipel (*Legion*) reveals the Red Skull as the villain behind the "Red Zone" disaster at Mt. Rushmore before July's issue #69 brings the climax of the story to a head! Then in August, look for a stand-alone tale in *Avengers* #70 that examines Wasp and Yellowjacket's relationship before September's issue #71 launches the five-part "Hunt for She-Hulk" story. That tale will see both a new member joining the Avengers roster and an Avenger fall in the line of duty. Johns ain't sayin' who steps in and who eats dirt, but expect the new member to have some assembling history behind him/her.

## BATGIRL (DC)

Love is in the air as Batgirl goes boy-crazy! In a two-part storyarc kicking off in June's *Batgirl* #41 (written by Dylan Horrocks with art by Adrian Sibar), Superboy takes Cassandra out on the town in Smallville, but soon thereafter, sparks fly when a mystery villain rears its ugly head. August's #43 teams Batgirl with Batman for another two-parter as they infiltrate the war-torn country of Tarakstan to face off against Black Wind—a revolutionary leader who manages to steal a piece of Cassandra's heart. Then, October's *Batgirl* #45 debuts the new ongoing art team (and former *Nightwing* team) of penciler Rick Leonardi and Jesse Delperdang.

## BATMAN BOOKS (DC)

The year of the Bat continues this summer! June's *Detective Comics* #783 sees white-hot *Y—The Last Man* scribe Brian K. Vaughan stepping up to Bat for a stand-alone story that features the Mad Hatter and Man-Bat returning to the streets of Gotham and giving Bats a bevy of headaches. After that, the regular *Detective* creative team of writer Ed Brubaker and incoming penciler Patrick Zircher (*Nightwing*) kick off a three-issue storyarc that will bring Batman, Professor Jim Gordon and Sentinel together to solve a crime in Gotham. Over in *Gotham Knights*, June's issue #42 at last reveals the nature of Alfred's ailment, which series writers Scott Beatty and Dean Motter and guest penciler Dave Ross have been building up to for months. After that, July's *Gotham Knights* #43 kicks off a three-issue storyarc that revisits the legacy of the late Robin II, Jason Todd. Finally, over in June's *Legends of the Dark Knight* #168, *Fables* writer Bill Willingham teams up with penciler Tom Fowler (*Star Wars: Jango Fett*) for a Batman tale starring an amnesia-suffering Dark Knight. For even more Batman, see **pgs. 91 and 93!**

## BATTLE OF THE PLANETS (Top Cow/Image)

The battle for control of Earth between G-Force and the insidious Spectra heats up! In June's issue #11, Chief Anderson tries to forge a coalition with the alien Rigans against Spectra, while an enemy from the past returns. Then in issue #12, the first maxi-series comes to a stunning conclusion with fast and furious fisticuffs between Spectra and G-Force for the final fate of the world! After that, look for a *Battle of the Planets/Voltron* crossover in September, followed by a manga one-shot in October. In November, the Cow releases a new six-issue mini-series called *G-Force* by the current creative team of writer Munier Sharrieff and penciler Wilson Tortosa.

## BIRDS OF PREY (DC)

June's *Birds of Prey* #56 sings an all-new tune thanks to the debut of writer Gail Simone (*Agent X*) and artists Ed Benes and Alex Lei (*Supergirl*). In their first storyarc, Oracle, Black Canary and new team member Huntress take on the enigmatic villain known as Savant, a white-collar serial murderer who claims he can outwit Oracle and outfight Canary—and he's got the goods to prove it! Meanwhile, moral and ethical questions arise concerning Oracle's methods of gathering information, which the rest of the Birds see as an invasion of privacy more than a means of solving crimes. Will the Birds have a catfight?

## BRATH (CrossGen Entertainment)

Brath Mac Garen and the clans are in for a rough summer. The war chief lost his sigil in issue #3, and an army of three legions led by

## POLL POSITION CONT.

MOST UNDER-UTILIZED CHARACTER

BOOK DESERVING BETTER SALES

COOLEST UPCOMING PROJECT

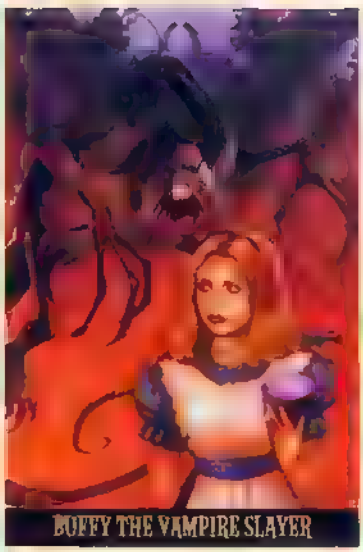
BOOK YOU JUST DON'T GET THE APPEAL OF

CLAIM TO FAME

HIS INSPIRATION

2003 BUZZ

SUMMER READING



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

General Vala launches an assault against the Mac Garen territories. Next up for the reeling Brath? "Gladiators, gladiators, gladiators," says writer Chuck Dixon. "Brath winds up on the Emperor's naughty list and is tossed into the arena where he must fight for his life. Also, tragedy strikes the Mac Garen clan when one of them is savagely murdered." Quique Alcatena joins the creative team as a regular fill-in artist with July's issue #6, backing up regular artist Andrea Di Vito.

## BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (Dark Horse)

The television show may have driven its last stake, but the Dark Horse comic continues the vampire hunt! In *Buffy* #58 and #59, writers Scott Lobdell and Fabian Nicieza and artist Cliff Richards wrap the "Slayer Interrupted" storyarc in which a heavily medicated Buffy tries to take down the demon Rakagore from the padded confines of a mental institution. Be sure to check out *BtVS: Chaos Bleeds*, a June one-shot tying into the upcoming *Chaos Bleeds* video game. Then in August, *Buffy* #60 kicks off a four-part storyline in which Buffy tackles the hardest event in her career as a Slayer—the divorce of her parents!

## CAPTAIN AMERICA (Marvel)

Captain America can't trust his own memories, much less anyone else's. June's issue #14 continues the "Ice" storyline by writers John Ney Rieber and Chuck Austen with art by Jae Lee. According to Austen, Cap's years of suspended animation inside an iceberg may not have been the accident he'd always remembered it to be. By issue #16, he'll find out if it was fate or the U.S. government that put him in deep freeze. In September, writer Dave Gibbons (*World's Finest*) and artist Lee Weeks (*Incredible Hulk*) hop aboard *Cap* for a four-issue in-continuity arc that explores what would have happened if the Nazis had won World War II.

## CAPTAIN MARVEL (Marvel)

Judge, jury and executioner for the universe—that's Captain Marvel's new role, according to writer Peter David. June's *Captain Marvel* #11, by David and artist Ivan Reis (*Lady Death*) is Part 3 of the four-part "Coven" storyarc, in which the major aliens in the universe come looking for some payback on Marv. Stuck in the middle is Rick Jones, who must find a way (from the Microverse, no less) to stop Marvel and the war he might be starting. After that, look for a rematch with the one person who could ultimately lay out the now nearly omnipotent Captain Marvel—his dead father, Mar-Vell!

## CATWOMAN (DC)

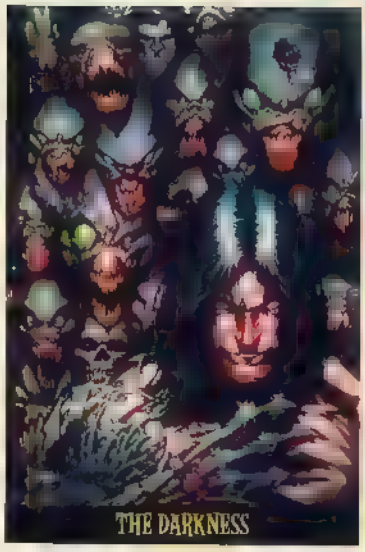
Selina Kyle hits the road as a five-part arc by writer Ed Brubaker and artist Cameron Stewart finds Catwoman traveling to various cities throughout the DCU. In June's issue #20, Selina and her sidekick Holly hit NYC and meet up with the JSA's Wildcat. In #21, Selina arrives in Central City, where she pulls a job with Captain Cold before landing in St. Roch to roost with Hawkgirl! Meanwhile, the love triangle between Selina-Batman-Slam Bradley heats up when Slam and Bats have a run-in! "It's 'Catwoman Lite' after the last two storyarcs, which were dark and depressing," explains Brubaker. "I wanted to lighten things up for everyone, because when Selina gets back to Gotham, things are gonna get even darker."

CAPTAIN AMERICA

## DAREDEVIL (Marvel)

Shocking revelations are the name of the game this

summer. Writer Brian Michael Bendis careens towards the finale of "Hardcore" in August's #50, which resolves the secret identity storyline in a completely unexpected way. Expect a guest appearance by Typhoid Mary and the return of the Kingpin! Plus, familiar artists from the history of *Daredevil*, from Gene Colan to John Romita Sr., will be involved! "It all ends with a huge payoff that will change the status quo of the book forever," promises Bendis. Then, Bendis and artist Alex Maleev take a break as David Mack (*Kabuki*) returns for a five-issue storyline featuring the popular Echo, last seen in *DD* #9-#15.




[redacted] (Top Cow/Image)

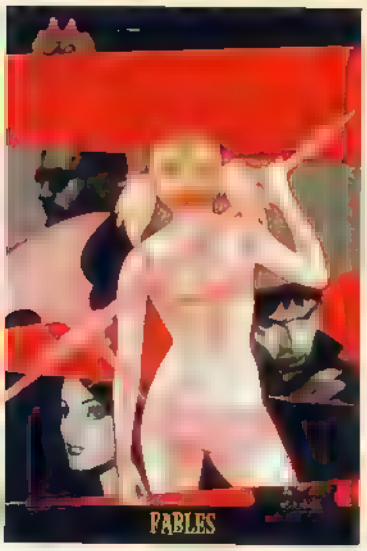
The lead storyline concludes with issue #6, as Jackie Estacado searches for a way to normalize his control of the family. "He's up against this rotten little bastard called Paulie who's 10 times worse than his old uncle Frank," explains writer Paul Jenkins. "So we get to this point where we give Paulie his just desserts. And only then do Jackie's problems begin, because then he's going to have to try and bring the world's most dysfunctional family together." Starting with fall's issue #7, Jenkins and artist Dale Keown will craft a series of single-issue stories that highlight individual supporting characters.

[redacted] (Marvel)

"We're taking Elektra back to being an assassin for hire," says new writer Robert Rodi (*Codename: Knockout*), who teams with former *Wolverine* penciler Sean Chen on June's issue #24. "We're just going to follow her on the job and see how she does what she does." After that, the team follows up with a three-part tale of Elektra hunting a new mark as fans see the hit from a few different points of view—including Elektra's and the target's—in July through September's issues #25-#27. "We're trying to turn this into an action and thrill book," says Rodi. "No guest stars, no soul-searching."

[redacted] (Marvel)

Writer Chuck Austen (*Uncanny X-Men*) and artist Clayton Henry (*X-Men Unlimited*) kick off the three-part "Unnatural Selection" in June's issue #28 as the Exiles travel to the core Marvel Universe, crossing paths with Austen's *Uncanny X-Men* cast. Issues #29 and #30 both ship in July and according to Austen, the story centers on the murder of two students at Xavier's school by one of the X-Men. "A lot of what happens in these *Exiles* issues will have ramifications in *Uncanny*," says the scribe. In August, writer Judd Winick (*Green Arrow*) returns along with artist Jim Calafiore (*Aquaman*) for "Avengers Forever," which finds the Exiles on a world where the Avengers have all been turned into vampires!




[redacted] (Vertigo/DC)

Issue #14 kicks off "Storybook Love," a summer-long, four-issue storyarc. The residents of Fabletown are shocked when they discover two of their most prestigious civil servants—Bigby Wolf and Snow White—have run off to a bucolic mountainside for a vacation, bringing only one sleeping bag! Later, in October's stand-alone issue #18 (which finds *Castle Waiting* creator Linda Medley teaming up with writer Bill Willingham for a story called "The Barleycorn Brides"), see what happens when Fabletown's tiniest resident, Thumbelina, holds all the cards for the future of Fabletown's smaller residents. Sounds like Tom Thumb's up the creek!

[redacted] (Marvel)

Marvel restores *FF* to its original numbering with July's mega-event, the conclusion to

## SUMMER REWIND

[redacted]

ELONGATED MAN (below right)

COMPOSITE SUPERMAN

ROCKET RACER

DR. SPECTRO

TATTERDEMALION (below left)

# Ones to WATCH

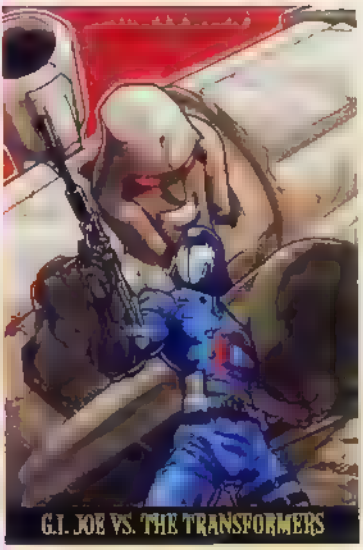
KEITH GALLATIN

CLAIM TO FAME

HIS INSPIRATION

2003 BUZZ

DID YOU KNOW?




"Unthinkable" in issue #500 (originally #71 before the re-numbering). The battle with Dr. Doom leaves members of the team permanently scarred. "Inside? Outside? Both? We're not telling!" teases writer Mark Waid. Plus, the issue guest-stars a longtime Marvel hero "whose presence in a tale about magic and sorcery should come as a perfectly logical surprise." Then, guest artist Casey Jones steps in for issues #501-#502, the epilogue to "Unthinkable." After that, Howard Porter (*JLA*) jumps on to pencil a biweekly, six-issue arc called "Authoritative Action" that's billed as an anti-*Authority* tale.

## FLASH (DC)

*Flash* #199 serves as the penultimate chapter of the current "Blitz" storyarc with Flash trading super-fast punches with Zoom, which segues into the senses-shattering conclusion in July's *Flash* #200. August's #201 debuts series penciler and blue chip newcomer Alberto Dose, kicking off the six-part "Ignition" arc. In addition to a few new Rogues—such as a revamped Mr. Element, now a bio-terrorist—writer Geoff Johns hints "Ignition" will "redefine who the Flash is, what his role in the DCU is, and show Keystone City in a new light." He adds, "It's gonna be a very different book—quite a bit darker."

## G.I. JOE (Devil's Due/Image)

"Cabal" wraps in issue June's #19 as an alliance of criminal organizations forms to stop Cobra Commander. To accomplish their goal, they kidnap Flint and Baroness, leading to a rescue attempt by the unlikely team of Destro, G.I. Joe and the October Guard! Up next is the big two-part ninja spectacular—issue #20 features a showdown between Storm Shadow and Snake-Eyes, and issue #21 is a brand-new silent issue (in the tradition of Marvel's classic *G.I. Joe* #21) by classic *Joe* cover artist Mike Zeck! It all leads into a four-issue storyarc, marking Josh Blaylock's final run as the series' regular writer, as issue #22 features the return of Serpentor!

## G.I. JOE VS. THE TRANSFORMERS (Devil's Due/Image)

Devil's Due's *G.I. Joe vs. The Transformers* offering bows in June with a six-issue tale set outside regular continuity. The premise? What if Cobra found the Transformers before they awoke on the Ark? "There's no G.I. Joe yet," explains writer Josh Blaylock, "and the U.S. is being attacked by this bizarre army with weird-looking H.I.S.S. tanks and Rattler jets—and when the vehicles transform into giant robots, we're all screwed." But it turns out Cobra didn't find *every* robot on the Ark—and what's more, they're having trouble controlling a few that they did. "Especially the big red and blue one!" teases Blaylock.

## GOTHAM CENTRAL (DC)

June finds Detective Renee Montoya the target of a vindictive felon in Part 3 of a five-part story called "Half a Life," a tale by writer Greg Rucka that he says is "a story I've been waiting five years to tell." Montoya becomes the victim when she's targeted for revenge in both her personal and professional life by a former collar she put away. Rucka's tale continues throughout the summer, wrapping in August's issue #10 before Ed Brubaker comes on board for a solo story. The two scribes then team up for a riveting three-part arc in issues #12-#14 which Brubaker boasts, "will have lasting repercussions throughout all the Bat-books."

[illegible] (DC)

The six-part "Straight Shooter" arc—which kicked off in May and served as the debut of the new *Green Arrow* creative team (new writer Judd Winick and returning artists Phil Hester and Ande Parks)—continues throughout the summer. Ollie's reckless dealings with the ladies—especially with Black Lightning's niece Joanna—are brought into the spotlight, and it'll be tough for DC's resident smooth talker to weasel his way out of this one. Meanwhile, Ollie and his crew discover the true nature of all the unnatural goings on in Star City, and find themselves going toe-to-toe with an all-new and deadly hitman named Drakon Constantine.

[illegible] (DC)

The new creative team of writer Ben Raab (*Green Arrow*) and penciler Rick Burchett (*Action Comics*) takes over in June with a two-part storyarc called "The Blind." Still bumming around in space, Kyle Rayner travels down some old paths of the cosmos and gains some new insight on the Green Lantern mythos, all while fighting off a new interstellar menace with the ability to wipe out entire solar systems at will! In later issues, Terry Berg begins a media campaign in hopes of gaining support for new hate crimes legislation, while Kyle makes headway with the remaining Green Lantern Corps members by rekindling some of their past adventures.

[illegible] (DC)

A fresh look at the Hawks' origin takes off in June's issue #16, the kicker of a three-part storyarc titled "The Thanagarian." Written by Geoff Johns with art by Rags Morales, "Thanagarian" returns Shayera Thal—the former Hawkwoman—to the DCU, and Hawkgirl is none too pleased by her entrance. Meanwhile, questions about the Silver Age Hawkman are answered, and one of Hawkman's greatest enemies forces his way back into Hawkman's life. Former JSA mainstay Black Adam makes a guest appearance in September's issue #19 as part of the JSA/Hawkman crossover "Black Reign," and an all-new villain named Headhunter butts in with October's issue #20.

[illegible] (Dark Horse)

*Hellboy: Weird Tales*—the bimonthly anthology in which some of the biggest names in the industry take a crack at Mike Mignola's creation—blazes on with June's issue #4, including stories and art from the likes of Alex Maleev (*Daredevil*), Will Pfeifer (*H-E-R-O*) and legendary *Sandman* penciler P. Craig Russell. The anthology returns in August once again, this time featuring the return of John Cassaday (*Captain America*) and a cover by Leinil Yu (*Superman: Birthright*). In July, keep your horns peeled for an all-new one-shot starring the bizarre cast of the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defense titled *B.P.R.D.: Dark Waters*. Written by Brian Augustyn (*Out There*) with art by Guy Davis (*The Nevermen*), the tale finds Abe Sapien and Roger the Homunculus discovering three perfectly preserved accused witches at the bottom of a dried Massachusetts town pond.

[illegible] (DC)

Wouldn't your job be more fun if you had the power to blast your boss with heat vision or become invisible when you screwed something up? In *H-E-R-O* #5, Matt Allen—a young executive who finds the mysterious H-device that transforms normal people into superheroes—discovers that playing superhero is much more exciting than being a corporate

[illegible]

RONALD REAGAN

[illegible]

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

[illegible]

JOHN K. KENNEDY

[illegible]

BILL CLINTON

[illegible]

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

# Ones to WATCH

CLAIM TO FAME

HER RÉSUME

2003 BUZZ

DID YOU KNOW?

drone. However, nothing's that easy, especially when Matt's teenaged daughter finds the H-device and takes it to school for show-and-tell in issue #6. August's issue #7 kicks off a two-part arc titled "Don't Try This at Home," which writer Will Pfeifer describes as MTV's "Jackass" with superpowers.

INCREDIBLE HULK (Marvel)

The first two parts (issues #55 and #56) of the five-part "Hide in Plain Sight" arc by writer Bruce Jones and artist Leandro Fernandez (*Queen & Country*) feature the return of the Absorbing Man! Bruce Banner travels to New York, where the locals are doing very bad things to themselves. With Crusher Creel detained in a security center deep beneath the city, Banner must discover how the villain is connected to NYC's problems. "There's a hell of a lot of 'Hulk smash!' in these issues," says Editor Axel Alonso. With September's *Hulk* #60, artist Mike Deodato joins Jones for another five-part arc that probes deeper into the conspiracy surrounding the Hulk and Bruce Banner.

IRON MAN (Marvel)

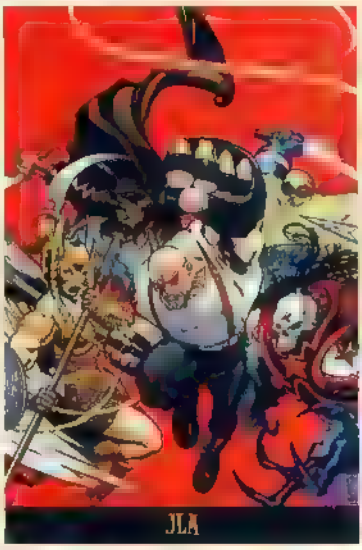
The "Manhunt" storyline concludes in June's *Iron Man* #69 by writer Robin Laws (*Hulk: Nightmerica*) and penciler Michael Ryan (*Cable*) as Tony Stark dons his armor to finally unmask the person trying to kill him. In July, Laws and Ryan return with a three-part tale featuring Stark jetting to Las Vegas only to become embroiled in a bizarre conspiracy revolving around aliens, private detectives and the ghost of Howard Hughes! "It's very rare for the ghost of Howard Hughes to make an appearance in a Marvel comic," says Editor Tom Brevoort. "But when he does, it's an event not to be missed."

JLA (DC)

This summer, it's survival of the fittest for the JLA! June kicks off a three-issue arc by Joe Kelly and fill-in artist Duncan Rouleau (*Action Comics*) that sees a revamp of a well-known villain group coming back with a grudge against the League. Then starting in August, regular series artists Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen return for the massive six-part summer event called "Trial By Fire" as *JLA* comes out twice a month through October! In "Fire," a number of the Leaguers who left following the "Obsidian Age" return just in time to go up against a new villain with ties to the League. And according to Kelly, the JLA has just one mission against this new threat: survive!

JSA (DC)

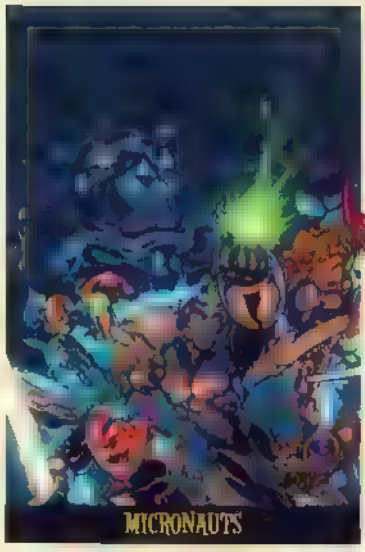
During the "Princes of Darkness" storyarc (which kicked off this past March), the JSA have had to face some of the DCU's most dangerous villains, including Kobra, Mordru and Eclipso. Now, in June's issue #49, they're fighting back—and they've called in every former member to help with the cause! After the arc's conclusion in July's issue #50, it's a battle to the death between the Crimson Avenger and Wildcat in August's issue #51, which will lead into the JSA/Hawkman crossover, "Black Reign," co-starring Black Adam. And be sure to check out November's *JSA* #54, when the JLA make a cameo appearance!




LADY DEATH (CrossGen Entertainment)

June's issue #5 finds Lady Death in a battle to escape the cathedral of a corrupt Arch Bishop. Then, the first storyarc climaxes in issue #6, answering the question: Will Lady Death take revenge against the men who murdered her

mother? Also in #6, the Eldritch declare war on Novgorod, the village where Lady Death was conceived! "There's a real 'last stand'-type battle in that issue," promises writer Brian Pulido, "and the outcome will surprise readers!" The second storyarc takes Lady D on a quest through the dangerous Borderlands, a realm that bridges the gap between Earth and Aglarond, the Eldritch realm.




[illegible] (DC)

June's issue #21 serves as Part 3 of the "Dream Crime" storyarc as the Legion face their biggest challenge to date—taking on the forces of Apokolips! A mystery villain lurks in the shadows, and while writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning will keep the surprise under wraps, it's not who fans may think. (In other words, it *ain't* Darkseid!) Once "Dream Crime" concludes, September's *Legion* #24 welcomes back Umbra in a story titled "Shadow Play," which reveals why her powers have been on the fritz. And don't miss October's *Legion* #25, which marks the 45th anniversary of the Legion with a top-secret shocker!

[illegible] (DC)

It's gore time! Veteran creator Keith Giffen's badass interplanetary bastich is back—and thanks to this all-new six-issue Vertigo mini-series, he's literally badder than ever! Debuting in June, *Lobo Unbound* teams Giffen with up-and-coming painter Alex Horley (*Heavy Metal*) and tells the story of the Main Man's struggle to regain his title of the baddest man in the universe after a new crop of bounty hunters—all on par with Lobo's taste for violence and crudeness—emerges to test the last Czarnian's murder skills. Fans who miss Lobo's trademarked bad taste and body count won't be disappointed!

[illegible] (Devil's Due/Image)

Writer Dan Jolley (*JSA: The Unholy Three*) and artist Steve Kurth (*G.I. Joe*) launch into the epic "Welcome to Earth" storyarc in June's issue #8, which finds the Micronauts returning to Earth for the very first time! The tiny heroes race to Earth to stop an invasion by Baron Karza, but when they arrive, the invasion's already begun. Look for plenty of sci-fi action as Karza's fleet of giant warships (the size of single-pilot ships on Earth) take on jet fighters in spectacular aerial dogfights, and mysterious satellites scan the human population and wipe out resistance by eliminating everybody with an I.Q. above 80!

[illegible] (Marvel)

Accepting a dangerous mission from Professor Xavier, Mystique travels to Cuba in issue #3 of the first six-issue arc from writer Brian K. Vaughan (*Y—The Last Man*) and artist Jorge Lucas (*Black Panther*). "Issue #4 and #5 are the fireworks issues," says Vaughan. "We'll see Mystique learning how bad the mutant population outside of America has it." Then in issue #6, look for the debut of the series' first major villain and a knockdown, drag-out fight for Mystique's life. "I like to think of each five or six issues as a mini-movie or television season," admits Vaughan. "You'll find out more and more about Mystique with each arc."

NEW X-MEN (Marvel)

Everyone's favorite Wolverine nemesis Sabretooth guest stars in issues #142 and #143, both shipping in June from writer Grant Morrison and penciler Chris Bachalo (*The Ultimate War*). The new four-part storyline, "Assault of Weapon Plus," focuses on Wolverine, Cyclops and mutant thief Fantomex

## SUMMER REWIND

[illegible]

[illegible]

BEPPO THE SUPER-MONKEY (right)

DEVIL DINOSAUR

REDWING (left)

STREAKY THE SUPER-CAT

HOOTIE

COMET THE [illegible]

traveling around the world to unlock the secrets of Wolverine's past—but as always, things don't go as planned for the mutants. In September, look for Phil Jimenez (*Wonder Woman*) to join Morrison on the title for the top-secret "Planet X" story that, according to Morrison, will unveil a number of clues to what's coming for the X-Men in 2004.

(DC)

Dick Grayson's life seems perfect—he's finally taken down the corrupt elements of the Bludhaven P.D. and his relationship with Barbara Gordon is flying high. Writer Devin Grayson and artists Rick Leonardi and Jesse Delperdang intend to change all that. The shake-ups kick off with the action-packed conclusion to the "Venn Diagram" storyarc in *Nightwing* #82, which finds Nightwing facing off against Deathstroke. Then, one of Nightwing's oldest foes (and DC ain't tellin' who) returns in July's issue #83—and when the mystery villain learns Nightwing's true identity, it'll make both Nightwing and Dick's lives a living hell for the rest of the year!

(DC)

June kicks off this all-new series written by Judd Winick (*Green Arrow*) with art by Tom Raney (*Thor*)! After recovering from the events that took place in the *Titans/Young Justice: Graduation Day* crossover, *Outsiders* #1 finds Nightwing and Arsenal recruiting a team of unique superheroes including Jade, Metamorpho (the only returning member from the original team), and Grace, the daughter of Black Lightning! Their first mission? Save Manhattan while protecting President Lex Luthor! A major Titans villain will return to give the squad a run for their money—especially when he releases a gaggle of prisoners from a maximum-security prison for metahumans!

(CrossGen Entertainment)

Get your swordplay and bloodshed quota filled right here. "The storm clouds of war are gathering, and then the rebellion really boils over as we go into samurai overdrive with epic battles aplenty!" promises writer Ron Marz. June's issue #16 finds Obo-san and Aiko mulling over a plan that involves turning themselves over to the opposition and Wulf and Yama going on an ill-fated recruiting trip. Then, in July's issue #17, Marz and artist Matthew Smith kick into high gear as Obo-san and Aiko journey into dangerous land controlled by the Nogawa clan to make an offer of alliance.

(Image)

Writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Michael Avon Oeming's superhero cop drama will see the secret history of the Powers unfold with "Forever," featuring the return of an old foe. "There was a villain called Wolf from the first storyarc, and he will be returning," reveals Bendis. "He was like the Hannibal Lecter of the Powers universe, and we never really found out the deal with him and Walker. We're going to find out now." Following that, Walker and Pilgrim's failure in a previous case will have drastic consequences for the whole world politics of superheroes. Three words: Powers become illegal!

(Marvel)

The three-part, western-themed "Streets of Laredo" arc begins with the *Preacher* team of writer Garth Ennis and penciler Steve Dillon relocating the Punisher to the Lone Star State in June's *Punisher* #28 as Frank Castle tracks down a ring of gunrunners in Texas. In September, issue #31 sees artist John McCrea (*Hitman*) joining Ennis

for an extended arc that boasts guest appearances from the Hulk, Spider-Man, Daredevil and Wolverine as the heroes begin to hunt down the Punisher. Fans can expect what's sure to be a no-holds-barred, twisted slugfest that only Ennis could write.

## ROBIN (DC)

June's *Robin* #115 wraps up the cults-and-creatures-filled "The Wrong Town" storyarc, which will certainly leave Robin—and fans of the series—a little unsettled. However, Tim Drake's not out of the woods yet, as July's issue #116 kicks off a five-issue storyarc that will run through November and shake the foundations of the title from here on out. *Robin* Editor Matt Idelson hints, "I can't really get into details too much here, but I will say that Robin's identity will be compromised, and when the story's done, we'll be changing about 99 percent of what fans have come to expect in the title."

## ROCKET BOOMS (Dark Horse)

Dark Horse's Rocket Comics revolution blasts off in June! The Horse's new line of ongoing, high-concept superhero comics ignites with *Go Boy 7*, a story about what happens when a typical teen's life is saved thanks to a tricked-out bionic suit. *Hell*, written by Brian Augustyn (*Out There*), penciled by newcomer Todd Demong and described as "The Island of Dr. Moreau' meets "Jonny Quest," touches down in July. In August, both *Earth X* writer Jim Krueger's gritty sci-fi series *Galactic* and writer Keith Giffen's *Syn* (a look at a futuristic world inhabited by robots who study past civilizations) hit the stratosphere as well.

## RULE (CrossGen Entertainment)

Writer Scott Beatty and artist Butch Guice have big things in store for master detective Simon Archard and his partner Emma Bishop. In June's issue #21, Archard is imprisoned for a murder he may or may not have committed. After that, Beatty introduces a supernatural element. "Things go bump in the night for several of our cast members who believe that Simon's residence is home to malevolent spirits with dark intent," teases Beatty. "And soon after that, Partington University is besieged by a vengeful sniper, the identity of whom can only be discovered with some very unorthodox detective work and an unlikely teaming."

## SAVAGE DRAGON (Image)

Starting in June, President George W. Bush declares war on a group of gods living on a big floating rock that's hovering above the U.S., all over the possibility that they're hoarding weapons of mass destruction. Then, writer/artist Erik Larsen will explore some of the book's numerous secondary characters. "I'm trying to flesh out a lot of the characters that have been loitering in this title for lo these many months and years, and try to make them more complete than they have been," laughs Larsen. "Plus, the Dragon gets a new costume and a new logo, and we kill off all sorts of characters!"

## SOJOURN (CrossGen Entertainment)

Ron Marz wraps up his run with June's issue #24, which finds Arwyn at the mercy of desert nomads and an enigmatic thief. Then, a brand-new arc begins as new writer Ian Edginton (*Kingdom of the Wicked*) takes over with the milestone issue #25. Arwyn's quest for the arrow of power continues, but when Mordath's soldiers capture her, she's forced to fight alongside one of her fiercest foes,

# SUMMER REWIND

WORLD'S FINEST #172 (1967)

WORLD'S FINEST #179 (1968)

WORLD'S FINEST #187 (1969)

WORLD'S FINEST #221 (1974)

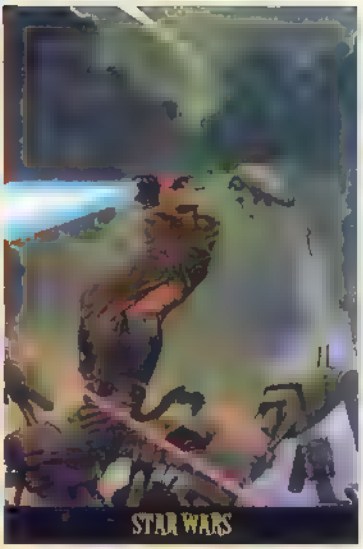
Ones to WATCH

CLAIM TO FAME

HIS INSPIRATION

2003 BUZZ

DID YOU KNOW?




the troll warrior called Bohr! Newcomer Lewis LaRosa provides guest pencils for a Mordath solo story in issue #26, and stay tuned...dragons are coming!

(Marvel)

June's *Amazing Spider-Man* #56 (by writer J Michael Straczynski and penciler John Romita Jr.) wraps up the "Digger" storyline as Spider-Man faces off against the gamma-irradiated Vegas mobsters introduced in issue #51. After that, look for Straczynski to team with co-writer Fiona Avery (*Rising Stars, Bright*) on a two-part story running through August's issue #57 that will guest-star Ezekiel, who continues his tutelage of Peter Parker. The story also focuses on the two-bit villains that Spider-Man webs up every night. When Spidey busts the older brother of one of the students he teaches as Peter Parker, he'll be forced to deal with ramifications in the classroom. Straczynski will reemerge as the solo *Amazing* writer for a top-secret arc beginning in issue #58, also shipping in August. *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* ends with issue #67, concluding writer Zeb Wells (*Tangled Web*) and *Zero Girl* artist Sam Kieth's two-part Sandman story. Then, look for *Spectacular Spider-Man* to relaunch in July with writer Paul Jenkins and artist Humberto Ramos. For the complete lowdown on this all-new Spidey series, **see p. 48!**

(Dark Horse)

Cue up the classic John Williams theme! Kicking off in June, the latest *Star Wars: Empire* arc (written by *Concrete* creator Paul Chadwick) finds General Dodonna—one of the Republic's most valuable strategists—fighting off an Imperial fleet of fighters he's trained personally. Also shipping in June is another volume of the wildly popular *Star Wars Tales* anthology, which will include new stories by Ashley Wood (*Popbot*) and Jason Hall (*Beware the Creeper*). In June's *Star Wars: Republic*, the Clone Wars saga continues as Obi-Wan and Anakin lead an army of Clone Troopers into a pivotal battle on the rain-soaked planet of Jabiim.

(DC)

June's *Action Comics* #804 and July's #805 (written by Joe Kelly with art by Pascual Ferry) conclude "The Harvest" storyarc as Superman teams up with a host of inmates from the Stryker's Island asteroid prison to take down General Zod. Over in *Superman*, June's issue #194 (written by Steven Seagle, art by Scott McDaniel) finds a series of events falling into place that could expose President Luthor. In July's #194, Supes comes face to face with the Futuresmiths—the mysterious alien race who have been behind the scenes since January's *10 Cent Adventure*. Over in June's *Adventures of Superman* #617 and July's #618 (written by Joe Casey with art by Charlie Adlard), Mr. Mxyzptlk is back, and he's brought a twin! But if you think this is the same cutesy imp, think again, as both Mxys are out to cause some serious damage! Finally, in the year-long *Metropolis* maxi-series (written by Chuck Austen, art by Danijel Zezelj), strange events unfold in the City of Tomorrow, leading up to a big change in January 2004's *Superman* #200.

(Marvel)

The controversial "Spiral" storyline (in which Thor's moved Asgard into the mortal plane

and taken a more active role in human affairs) concludes with *Thor* #65 in June and July's #66. "At the end of this story, there will be a final resolution to Thor's involvement with Earth," says writer Dan Jurgens. "There has to be a winner, and after this it won't be 'Thor: Lord of Asgard'—it'll be 'Thor: Lord of Earth.'" August's issue #67 serves as an epilogue to "Spiral" while September's #68 begins a whole new story that sees the Thunder God becoming an even *bigger* player in world events!

(Top Cow/Image)

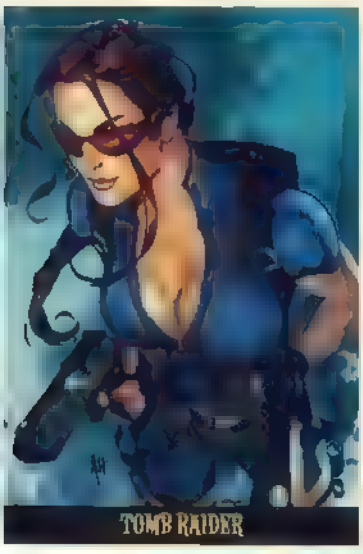
Writer Adam Hughes and artist Tony Daniel unleash a three-issue arc based on the upcoming *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* video game starting with July's issue #32. The story finds Lara on the run from a murderous secret organization in the underworlds of Paris and Prague. Issue #35 kicks off "Black Legion," written by newcomer James Bonny. Lara hunts for buried treasure in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, a place from which no explorer has returned alive. The story introduces Joe Not Afraid, who possesses the map to the treasure, as well as a new sexy female nemesis named Lady Jasmine

(Dreamwave)

Artist Pat Lee keeps the Energon cubes handy as Grimlock and the Dinobots show up in June's issue #3 for a ground-shaking throwdown with Decepticons Shockwave, Blitzwing and the Triple Changers! Next up, a battle-weary Optimus Prime wanders the wastelands of Cybertron, and you'll never guess who he runs into! "Fans of the 'Transformers' movie will be happy to see these characters!" teases writer Brad Mick. (Do we smell Junkions?) In August's issue #5, a full-scale riot breaks out in Cybertron's Iacon City as one Transformer begins to undergo the ultimate transformation! And it *ain't* puberty!

(Dreamwave)

August sees the launch of Dreamwave's half of the mega '80s crossover event. Writer John Ney Rieber (*Captain America*) and artist Jae Lee craft a six-issue alternate reality story set in World War II. "Cobra forms a deadly alliance with the Decepticons, and the technology they're bringing to the battleground is so far beyond anything the Allies can muster," reveals Rieber. "So we're going to lose the war, no bones about it. And that's when G.I. Joe is formed. They spearhead a desperate assault against the stronghold of the mysterious Shadow Axis and awaken the Autobots, and that's the *real* battle begins."




(Marvel)

Peter Parker has a whole new set of problems this summer. Writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Mark Bagley introduce the first original Ultimate Spider-Man villain. Going by the name of Geldoff (no, not Bob), the mysterious new rogue comes from a rival high school to Peter Parker's and will act almost as an evil equivalent to Spidey starting with June's issue #42. In September, look for Bendis to team with former *Captain America* penciler Trevor Hairsine for the six-part *The Six* mini-series, which teams Spider-Man with the Ultimates to square off against the Ultimate incarnation of the Sinister Six.

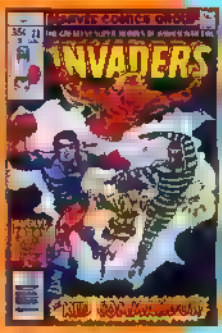
(Marvel)

"Summer sees everyone kicking ass for the first time," says *Ultimates* writer Mark Millar

## SUMMER REWIND

REX THE WONDER DOG

KID COMMANDOS (below)




CREATURE COMMANDOS

G.I. ROBOT (left)

CLAIM TO FAME

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of June's issue #10. "The fight with the Hulk [in issue #5] was just a warm-up for the devastation we'll see." Millar and artist Bryan Hitch place the Ultimates against an alien invasion in issues #10-#13, shipping every six weeks. Millar says the team can barely comprehend what they're doing—saving six billion lives! "This also features the return of Cap's big War World II nemesis, and he's back to finish the job," teases Millar. "Cap came back from the dead once, but you don't get that lucky a second time."

(Marvel)

Writer Chuck Austen (*Captain America*) teams with new X-artist Phillip Tan (*Mutant Earth, Realm of the Claw*) for June's *Uncanny* X-Men #425 and #426 in which Havok and Polaris, who may or may not have ulterior motives, will finally tie the knot! In July, look for *Uncanny* #427 by Austen and guest artist Sean Phillips (*Sleeper*) to reveal plenty of secrets from Nightcrawler's past—including his real parents' identities! August's #428 then begins a huge six-part story that will feature the return of a classic X-Men villain who has taken to performing horrible experiments on mutants.

(Dark Horse)

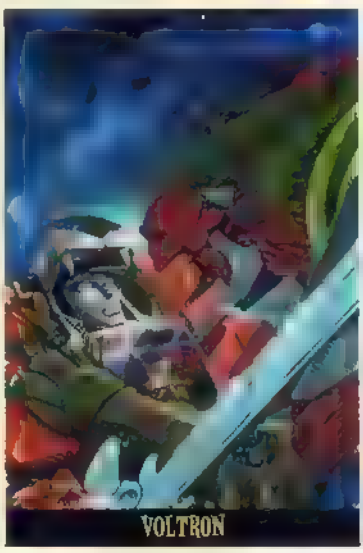
Issues #67 and #68 conclude *Usagi* creator Stan Sakai's three-part homage to giant Japanese movie monsters titled "Sumi-e." See what happens when a demonic "artist" (who uses the blood of children as paint for his monster pieces) kidnaps Usagi's young son Jotaro and discovers he's got one P.O.-ed bunny samurai and Sasume the sorcerer on his demon ass! Expect a daring escape attempt led by Usagi's offspring and a bizarre final battle as Usagi learns that in order to defeat the demon, he must learn to paint like him! We wanna see combative throw-painting!

(Marvel)

Expect three issues of havoc and death this summer in June through August's *Venom* #3-#5. According to writer Daniel Way, who teams with artist Francisco Herrera (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*), the series continues its first arc ("Shiver") throughout the summer as Venom treks through the Arctic systematically killing everyone he can find. "Venom's actually on the run from some very bad things," says Way. "There are things worse than Venom these days. He's trying to make his way to New York where he can blend in." After the summer issues, look for a new arc taking place in Canada where Venom runs into Wolverine!

(Devil's Due/Image)

Starting in June's issue #2, it's a race against time as both the Voltron Force and the evil Drule forces search the galaxy for the fabled missing Lions. As the arc progresses, the Robeasts are introduced as monsters bred on a remote planet by the witch Hagar to invade and consume the populations of planets being invaded by Zarcon. The V-Force discovers the five Lions on a strange alien world and form Voltron for the very first time in issue #5, which leads to a massive battle with Prince Lotor and the Drule forces! Just wait 'til you see Voltron unleash his flaming sword!




(CrossGen Entertainment)

Starting with June's issue #14, things get

spooky in the pages of Chuck Dixon's martial arts actionfest, as former thief Boon and his talking monkey Po Po unwittingly unleash a horde of imprisoned ghosts in the land of Zhumar. Guest artist Luke Ross (*X-Man*) fills in for regular artist Jeff Johnson in this ninja-heavy tale. Plus, Emperor Zheng sends a deadly assassin to kill Boon. "And what a killer!" teases Dixon. "This guy is fast and mean, and you'll never guess who steps in to help Boon. Remember, we offed two major players in the last arc—so all bets are off in this book!"

[illegible] (Top Cow/Image)

Writer Chuck Austen contributes a stand-alone story in issue #66 that deals with a wheelchair-bound child with the ability to summon monsters, while issue #67 is a tale about a cannibal woman by Geoff Johns and Kris Grimminger. The regular creative team of David Wohl and Francis Manapul return with #68 for a two-issue arc that finds Sara Pezzini on the open road away from New York City. Everything builds up to #75, the anniversary issue that culminates several ongoing storylines, including the return of Ian Nottingham. Plus, look for the *Witchblade Animated* one-shot by Paul Dini and Darwyn Cooke in August!

[illegible] (Marvel)

Logan's a mutant on a mission this summer. June's issue #2 of writer Greg Rucka and *Transmetropolitan* artist Darick Robertson's *Wolverine* relaunch sees Logan visiting a gun show to track down the men that killed his secretive young neighbor in issue #1. According to Rucka, the story runs through September's issue #5 and will see Wolverine unsheathe his claws only sparingly. "When he does use his claws, it will be very big," says Rucka. "Towards the end of this story, you'll see him go berserk, and it's not pretty." After that, look for an appearance by Logan's old drinking buddy, Nightcrawler!

[illegible] (Marvel)

After a two-month hiatus for the *Wolverine/Doop* flashback mini-series, *X-Statix* returns in July with issue #11 as writer Peter Milligan and artist Mike Allred introduce a new character—El Guapo! (No, not the villain from "Three Amigos"—but something just as nasty.) Issue #12 then centers on team member Dead Girl's private life. After that, things are up in the air for the title as either a very special guest writer takes a crack at the book or Milligan will return for the first part of a mammoth arc that will feature the resurrection of one of the biggest real life icons in the world, according to *X-Statix* Editor Axel Alonso.

[illegible] LAST MAN (Vertigo/DC)

"Alas, poor Yorick"...well, you know the rest. Writer Brian K. Vaughan and artists Pia Guerra and José Marzan Jr. continue the "One Small Step" arc in issues #12-#14. Yorick meets a mysterious Russian woman, who leads him to a farm in Kansas that may be more than it seems. And word travels back to Earth that there are people alive on the International Space Station—and some of them are men! "But even if any of these people are still alive, will they be able to make it back home in one piece?" asks Vaughan. "And who will be waiting for them if and when they return?"

# ALSO in 2003

**BEWARE THE CREEPER** (Vertigo/DC) In June's Part 3 of the five-issue mini-series, The Creeper's art crimes take a drastic turn, as the enigmatic superhero becomes a cultural phenomenon. If only the authorities thought the same way ..

**BLACKBURNE COVENANT** (Dark Horse) Part 3 of the four-part mini-series ships this June and finds Manhattan author Richard Kaine looking deeper into the mysterious, 500-year-old document. When he discovers a series of terrifying prophecies, it's the one about a "second coming" that really has him shaking in his boots.

**CLOCK MAKER** (Image) The 12-issue series reaches its midpoint with July's issue #6, as Hans encounters an unexpected foe in the lava pits below the ancient clockworks—a threat that endangers the entire world.

**CRIMINAL MACABRE: A CAL MCDONALD MYSTERY** (Dark Horse) Despite constant hassles from the cops and a serious alcohol and drug-addiction problem, private investigator Cal McDonald just might be L.A.'s last line of defense against a horde of vampires and werewolves.

**CRUX** (CrossGen Entertainment) July's issue #28 kick-starts a brand new era as artist Sergio Carrello (*Azrael*) jumps onboard. The world-altering experiment is the only thing that can defend Atlantis from a massive Negation invasion!

**DAWN: THREE TIERS** (Image) A brand-new, fully-painted six-issue mini-series from creator Joe Linsner kicks off with Dawn guiding Darrian Ashoka through a post-apocalyptic Europe ruled by magic, war and intrigue.

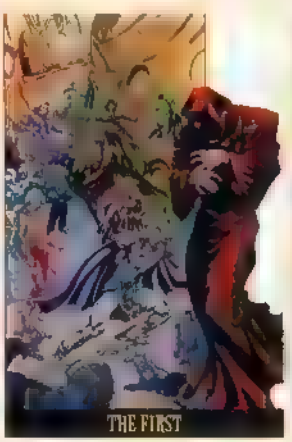
**THE DEVIL'S FOOTPRINTS** (Dark Horse) After spending a lifetime learning the black arts, Brandon must now face off against the ancient demon that destroyed his father...and all hell's coming with him in the terrifying conclusion to the four-part mini-series!

**FALLEN ANGEL** (Vertigo/DC) Launching in July, writer Peter David's *Fallen Angel* kicks off with two stand-alone issues, the first of which introduces the Angel. The second ish focuses on a mother searching for her son, who's fallen into prostitution.

**THE FILTH** (Vertigo/DC) The mysterious Mother Dirt and the secret origins of the Hand organization are revealed in issue #12. It all leads up to the series' shocking conclusion in #13, as Ned Slade—the amnesiac Hand officer—discovers the horrifying truth of his past.

**THE FIRST** (CrossGen Entertainment) Gannish has made a shocking discovery, and he's forced to take his knowledge to Pyrem, the leader of House Dexter—and not even gods are immune to the truth!

**FRAY** (Dark Horse) The series' long-awaited conclusion ships this June! Melaka Fray's brother has led a vampire war that intends to not only take over Manhattan, but also bring to Earth a demonic dragon—yet Fray's biggest obstacle remains to be unseen!



**FREEMIND** (Future Comics) In June's issue #8, Mac Flint uncovers a technological menace that threatens the security of the free world. Plus, a FlinTech employee betrays his co-workers, .with deadly results!

**GEN$^{13}$** (WildStorm/DC) Believing that Caitlin's been murdered, Gen$^{13}$ teammate Ja'Nelle goes out in search of vengeance in *Gen$^{13}$* #10. However, her search just may destroy the future of the Gen$^{13}$ team!

**G.I. JOE: FRONTLINE** (Devil's Due/Image) Zanya, the daughter of Zartan, hits the road in issue #9 in search of her father's gang in a two-part origin tale by Sean McKeever (*Sentinel*) and newcomer Francis Portela.

**GLOBAL FREQUENCY** (WildStorm/DC) In issue #9, an experimental medical center in Japan cuts itself off from the rest of the world—with over 100 doctors and patients inside! Meanwhile, the only Global Frequency operative in the area is the one trying to leave the organization to begin with.

**THE GOON** (Dark Horse) Creator Eric Powell's indy sensation, combining the world of Hellboy with Dick Tracy, debuts at Dark Horse this June. Watch the Goon and sidekick Franky punch zombies, pummel demons and (accidentally) pound each other!

**HARLEY QUINN** (DC) A five-issue storyarc kicks off in issue #33 which finds Harley working as a mercenary hunting down a man on the run and trying to retrieve an object of limitless value. The only thing standing in her way? A host of bounty hunters who want the same prize!

**HELLBLAZER** (Vertigo/DC) Ol' John Constantine's gonna have his hands full in issue #185! In a story titled "Ordeal," Constantine meets the children of Cain and braves the borders of Eden in his attempt to discover the truth behind the Shadow Dog Legend.

**HUMAN TARGET** (Vertigo/DC) The all-new *Human Target* ongoing series, written by

# ALSO in 2003

Peter Milligan with art by Javier Pulido, kicks off this August and once again finds Chris Chance embroiled in a world of espionage and thrills as he adopts the identities of people being threatened with murder

**HUMAN TORCH** (Marvel) Parts 3 and 4 of "Burn" continue in June and July as readers learn more about Johnny Storm's high school years. And as the Torch comes closer to confronting the combustion killer, he must make a fatal choice

**INHUMANS** (Marvel) In June's issue #2, the Inhumans learn the reason for their royal summons—and don't like what they hear. Then in July, worlds begin to collide as the Inhumans travel to their new home—Earth.

**JACK STAFF** (Image) The war in Castletown rages on in June's issue #3, and issues #4 and #5 will finally reveal why Jack Staff gave up the superhero gig 20 years ago! Plus, the Q (think British "X-Files" investigators) get a new recruit.

**JOHN CARPENTER'S SNAKE PLISSKEN CHRONICLES** (Code 6/CGE) His name's Snake.. and he's back! After escaping from L.A. and New York, his next stop in the violent and chaotic United States is Atlantic City, where the ultimate car boost awaits!

**KINGPIN** (Marvel) A young Wilson Fisk begins to shape his criminal empire in June's issue #1 of the six-issue mini-series that follows the future Kingpin from his humble roots to his complete control of New York crime.

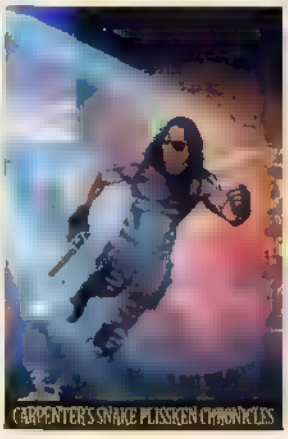
**KORE** (Devil's Due/Image) Alex Crane is brought to the city of Chimera in the fantasy world of Abaddon starting in June's issue #2. There, he'll face vampire bikers, a spunky blue fairy and the Dwarven Police Department.

**LIBERTY MEADOWS** (Image) Wacky hijinks abound in the crazy animal sanctuary, as Frank goes lingerie shopping for Jen while the angry Cow confronts Ralph and Leslie after being released from prison in issue #32.

**LONE WOLF 2100** (Dark Horse) The finale to the epic "Pattern Storm" storyarc ships this June! After escaping the clutches of the Belladonna's evil machinations, Ito must now square off against an army of his former companions in Cygnat Owari's Inner Security Team!

**THE LOSERS** (Vertigo/DC) In this hard-hitting crime/espionage ongoing series written by Andy Diggle (*Lady Constantine*) with art by Jock (*Hellblazer*), find out what happens when an offshoot of the CIA decides to expose the truth behind the powerful government agency—and the price they pay for doing so!

**MAGDALENA** (Top Cow/Image) The new series launches in July with the introduction of Patience, the newest beauty to become the Magdalena. She'll tangle with a religious group bent on controlling the Magdalena's weapon, the Spear of Destiny.



**MERIDIAN** (CrossGen Entertainment) The world-changing exploits of young Sephie are legendary—and on the unity voyage of the sunship, an unlikely candidate is chosen to chronicle her deeds.

**METALLIX** (Future Comics) Team Metallix try out a new military training process in issue #8, which involves virtual reality simulators. However, they soon discover that a hidden enemy awaits them in cyberspace.

**MYSTIC** (CrossGen Entertainment) July's issue #38 finds a powerless Giselle trapped in a dungeon while Geomancer Guild's Master Archemus prepares to throw the world of Ciress into disarray!

**NAMOR** (Marvel) Look for Namor the teenage Prince of Atlantis to begin his first relationships with humans in June's issue #3. After that, check back for startling developments that will shape the future Avenging Son.

**NEGATION** (CrossGen Entertainment) Obregon Kaine and his crew stumble upon a prison planet filled with inmates from across the CrossGen Universe. Also on the planet? Negation technology that can get the fugitives home.

**NEW MUTANTS** (Marvel) Once a student at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, Dani Moonstar now finds herself recruiting mutants for the school in June's issue #3. Look for tons of new characters and major drama as classes begin.

**100 BULLETS** (Vertigo/DC) In July's issue #46, all hell breaks loose as Loop Hughes tries to survive a series of assassination attempts in prison! *100 Bullets* temporarily goes on hiatus in August while creators Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso take over *Batman*.

**OUT THERE** (Cliffhanger/DC) While the future of El Dorado City hangs in the balance, the demonic Draedalus returns looking for the all-powerful Talisman. Can the combined power of the kids stop him again, or could this be their final stand?

# ALSO in 2003

**THE POSSESSED** (WildStorm/DC) This six-issue mini-series written by Geoff Johns (*Avengers, Flash*) and comics newcomer Kris Grimminger finds a group of modern-day exorcists battling demons who inhabit the bodies of children (their souls are yummier than those of adults). Once exorcised, the demons are vulnerable to silver, holy water, machine guns and rocket launchers! Look for art by former *Incredible Hulk* penciler Liam Sharpe!

PvP

SCION

**PvP** (Image) Skull the Troll runs away from home! Brent's constant bullying drives the PvP gang's lovable mascot out onto the streets. In July's issue #3, it's up to a reluctant Brent to find Skull and make amends.

**RUNAWAYS** (Marvel) June's issue #3 of *Runaways* brings the group of young teenagers closer together as they learn more about their individual powers and about their parents' heinous supervillain careers.

**SCION** (CrossGen Entertainment) The threat of invasion from the kingdom of Tigris continues to put pressure on the feuding Raven and Heron kingdoms to unite. Meanwhile, Ethan and Bron throw down for the third and final time in June's issue #37.

**SILVER SURFER** (Marvel) In a launch of the long-awaited new ongoing series, the Silver Surfer returns to Earth, where children are being abducted all over the world. But are the kidnapped children being taken by extraterrestrials or something much worse?

**SIMPSONS COMICS** (Bongo) Homer loses his job in June's issue #83, but the radioactive spider bite he suffers inspires him to start a new career at the Lard Lad Donut Factory while his superpowers develop!

**SLEEPER** (WildStorm/DC) In June's issue #6, undercover International Operations agent Holden Carver and the barbaric Genocide team up and inadvertently run into a woman from Holden's past—but the reunion ain't a happy one.

**SOLUS** (CrossGen Entertainment) In this series from writer Barbara Kesel and artist George Pérez, Andra Radiant's planet-jumping leads her to Elysia in search of the remaining six weapons of Atwaal in July's issue #5—but she'll have to go through The First to get 'em!

**SPIDER-GIRL** (Marvel) Originally planned for cancellation with June's issue #61, *Spider-Girl* has been saved and will return with a whole new storyline as a mysterious villain begins hunting the heroes of the M2U.

**STORMWATCH: TEAM ACHILLES** (WildStorm/DC) One of Stormwatch's own dies after a bloody shootout in the streets of New York City in issue #12. In the wake following the funeral, more questions arise concerning the team's true mission.

**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES** (Dreamwave) July's *TMNT* #1 ties into the first four episodes of the animated series as the Turtles and Shredder are reintroduced. Look for tons of Turtle action but also a focus on supporting characters like the policeman who initially spots the Turtles.

**THUNDERCATS** (WildStorm/DC) The shocking conclusion to *Thundercats: The Return* hits with June's issue #5, as Lion-O faces off with Mumm-Ra in a bloody battle to the death! Meanwhile, the five-issue *Thundercats: Dogs of War* mini-series kicks off with King Lion-O looking for a successor, which leads him to an unlikely source for help—Mumm-Ra!

**21 DOWN** (WildStorm/DC) It *all* goes down in issue #10, when Preston and Mickey face off against the physical manifestation of an American war hero's psychological trauma. Too bad Mickey's already got her hands full with her daughter, who's out to destroy her lab!

**VAMPIRELLA** (Harris) Kicking off the summer in June with the *Magdalena/Vampirella* one-shot, Harris' bloodthirsty vampire teams with the Top Cow *femme fatale* as the two take on a long forgotten evil with ties to the Catholic Church. August sees a new one-shot featuring Vampirella traveling to Scotland as she deals with the family curse of a close friend.

**WEAPON X** (Marvel) Soldier X (formerly Cable) joins the *Weapon X* cast in June's issue #10 as he confronts the team about the secrets of the Neverland concentration camp in a six-part tale.

**WILDCATS VERSION 3.0** (WildStorm/DC) In a story titled "The Night the Lights Went Out in Garfield," recently fired corporate drone Sam Garfield is pushed to the limits of sanity, and a random fit of road rage finds him in a situation he can't control. But where do the Wildcats and Halo fit in?

**X-TREME X-MEN** (Marvel) The sequel to Chris Claremont's epic "God Loves, Man Kills" story continues throughout the summer with June's issues #27 to August's #29, as Wolverine and Kitty Pryde guest star to go up against the Rev. Stryker.

SLEEPER

VAMPIRELLA

# FUTURE FORECAST

Sure, it might seem like we know everything after all those previews you just read, but the fact is, there are some projects that we can't see so clearly in the ol' crystal ball. Here's a sneak peek at the projects you'll see coming your way in the fall and winter of 2003

## JLA/AVENGERS

It's quite possibly the most anticipated crossover event *of all time*, so it's not surprising that the lips of everybody involved, including the superstar creative team of writer Kurt Busiek and artist George Pérez, are firmly sealed. But Busiek assures us that everything is on track. "It's going just fine," confirms the scribe. "Of course, I can't tell you anything! I don't have permission. But the latest that's been said is that it'll be coming out this fall. And man, it looks good."

## HULK: GRAY

Fans were hoping to see the latest "color book" from the dynamic duo of writer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale this summer...but they'll have to wait a little bit longer. "Marvel wants to have three to four issues in house before they solicit," reveals Loeb. "For people who weren't thrilled that *Spider-Man: Blue* #6 was late, this is Marvel's solution. We had hoped to make the opening of the movie, but the great part about this story is that it works before, during and after the movie. Tim Sale [art] is timeless."

## DR. STRANGE

The Doctor is finally in, according to *Amazing Spider-Man* scribe J. Michael Straczynski

JMS has long talked of launching a new *Dr. Strange* series, and now the writer says it's close to actually becoming a reality in this dimension. Although not scheduled as of yet, JMS has penned a detailed outline for a mini-series that would update the good doctor for current readers. "The *Dr. Strange* mini, which may well lay the foundation for a regular book, is something that Marvel wants to do as soon as I get the time to do it straight through," says the writer. "It's kind of a re-imagining of his back story, not so much changing it as updating it and reconsidering it in a modern, post-'Matrix' readership."

## LEE, HUSH'S NEXT BATMAN ARC

After DC announced the dynamic duo of writer Jeph Loeb and penciler Jim Lee had agreed to continue on *Batman* for an additional six issues, Bat-fans almost immediately stopped asking the question, "Who is Hush?" and began asking, "What'll happen in the next six issues?" While both Loeb and Lee have decided to keep the next arc top secret for the time being, both creators hint that Robin will play a major role in the next storyarc. And while DC has no official comment at this time, expect to see some major changes in *Batman* in the coming months!

## JLA: LIBERTY & JUSTICE

Scheduled to ship sometime this fall, Alex Ross and writer Paul Dini team up once again for an oversized DC project, this time to tell the definitive JLA story. What Ross openly refers to as his "dream project," fans can expect to see the Justice League's "Big Seven" (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter) taking on an interstellar menace that threatens to destroy the Earth. "Ever since I was a teenager, this has been the comic project I wanted to do," says Ross. "An oversized, fully-painted book that makes you feel as though you've just traveled across the world and back again."

## THE SIX

"This is a story that was too big for *Ultimate Spider-Man*," says writer Brian Michael Bendis of the new six-issue mini-series planned for September. With art by Trevor Hairsine (*Captain America*), the series will see the debut of the Ultimate Sinister Six, consisting of Norman Osborn, Doctor Octopus, Electro and a few other still top-secret members. According to Bendis, the series is so big, he had to break it out of the regular *Ultimate Spider-Man* title and even use the Ultimates to give Peter Parker a little extra muscle as the teen hero faces his most grueling challenge yet. ■ **THE WIZARD STAFF**

**HEROES HORIZON** Alex Ross' *JLA: Liberty and Justice* and J. Michael Straczynski's upcoming *Dr. Strange* series are two of the biggest projects hitting late in 2003.

# INDY COMICS

It's summer—time to ditch the earmuffs, break out the sunglasses and live life to the fullest... so why are you still reading the same comic titles you were this time last year?

**BONE** (Cartoon Books) Jeff Smith's *Bone* #54 (June) finds the cast facing a series of ultimate decisions that will pave the way for the shocking series conclusion in August's *Bone* #55! Say it ain't so!

**CEREBUS** (Aardvark-Vanaheim) In June's *Cerebus* #291, Cerebus realizes he must tell his epic story—if only he can make it to his desk to write it all down. The countdown to creator Dave Sim's highly anticipated series conclusion (March 2004) continues!

**DARK DAYS** (IDW Publishing) The blood-drenched sequel to Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith's *30 Days of Night* kicks off this June and finds former Alaskan cop (and now a widow) Stella Olemaun vowing to track down and kill all remaining vampires.

**GENERIC COMIC BOOK** (Comics Conspiracy) It's the "Unlucky #13" issue this June, as our generic superhero (a hilarious parody of your average dude in tights, now joined by the members of Super Team) fights off a needlessly complex death trap.

**HIP FLASK** (Comicraft) Continuing the origin of Hieronymous "Hip" Flask, this August's *Hip Flask: Elephantmen* one-shot finds the half-hippo, half-man creature struggling to survive in the world of man. Written by Joe Casey (*Adventures of Superman*) with painted art by Ladrönn (*Cable*).

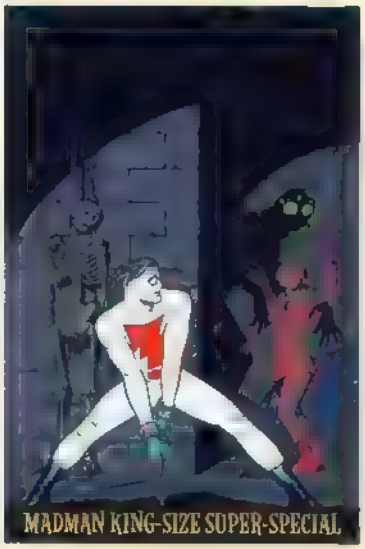
**HOPELESS SAVAGES: TOO MUCH HOPELESS SAVAGES!** (Oni Press) The original creative team of writer Jen Van Meter and artist Christine Norrie reunite this June for this all-new four-issue mini-series, which finds the Savage family heading to Hong Kong.

**JUNGLE GIRL** (IDW Publishing) Writer/artist Janet Harvey's ongoing adventure epic, which combines the world of "Tarzan" and "Apocalypse Now," debuts at IDW this July and follows a South American native as she tries to adjust in a modern world.

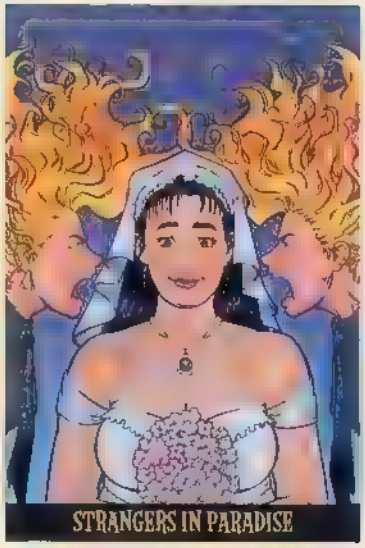
**LOVE FIGHTS** (Oni Press) *Powers* meets "Friends" in this all-new ongoing series by Andi Watson (*Namor*) debuting in June, which follows the trials and tribulations of dating in

**WILD KINGDOM** Do ya like rhinos and hippos slugging it out? Then check out *Hip Flask*!

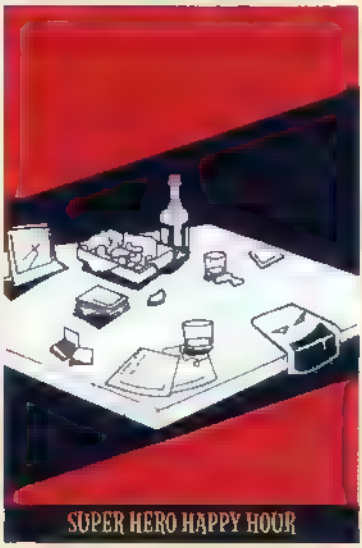
# SUMMER PREVIEW



MADMAN KING-SIZE SUPER-SPECIAL



STRANGERS IN PARADISE



SUPER HERO HAPPY HOUR

a world inhabited by superheroes. Does a normal guy even stand a chance at scoring?

(Oni Press) *X-Statix* penciler Mike Allred returns to his signature creation this July with an all-new 24-page special, which finds Madman taking on a frogman and swamp scientists.

(Oni Press) The *Skinwalker* creative team of Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir return to Oni this July with this all-new graphic novel about a dysfunctional family on their daughter's wedding day. Think of it as "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" meets quality entertainment.

(Top Shelf Productions) Xeric Award winner Scott Mills (*Trenches, Big Clay Pot*) returns with an all-new, sci-fi graphic novel this June that pays homage to Arthur C. Clarke and Stephen Hawking.

(Humanoids Publishing) July's issue #7 features a new story titled "Fragile" by *Blackburne Covenant* artist Stefano Raffaele which tells a tale of love from the perspective of two decaying zombies.

(Slave Labor Graphics) If you dig the conspiracy twists of *100 Bullets*, check out *Private Beach*. In July's issue #8, Trudy now works for the mysterious Network, but she'll soon discover she's been working for them since the day she was born!

(Abstract Studios) In August's *Strangers in Paradise* #60, Francine gets married (for real this time!), but not before a long and painful talk with Katchoo. It's a turning point in the series that creator Terry Moore says *Strangers* fans won't want to miss.

(El Capitán) Dave Lapham's hardboiled crime epic continues on with June's issue #33, which finds an abused 15-year-old seeking revenge not only on her tormentors, but anyone who crosses her path!

(GeekPunk) After a teeth-rattling slugfest in June's *SHHH* #3, First City's elite superheroes return to "Happy Hour" at the Hideout Bar and Grill to increase their tabs and swap hilarious stories about the biz. ■ CASEY SELIAS

## CATCH the SPIRIT

# PIXELATED COMICS

## Capcom, Dreamwave hook up for new line of game-inspired books

Capcom fans, your dreams are about to come true. Beginning in August, Dreamwave will bring Megaman, Dante and other digital stars to life on the printed page, many for the first time. Capcom benefits from Dreamwave's ample experience in turning licensed properties like Transformers into comic book success, and the gaming addicts at Dreamwave get to go nuts playing with some of their all-time favorite characters.

"A lot of the guys here, including myself, are Capcom freaks!" gushed Dreamwave head honcho Pat Lee. "We were interested in *Devil May Cry* because we thought it was a really interesting concept for a comic book. So we contacted Capcom and showed them some pieces of Dante art, and they were excited about it, and it just sprung from there! We want to make sure that we're doing these properties justice, because we're big game fans, and we have a good understanding of the properties from the artistic level and from the storytelling level."

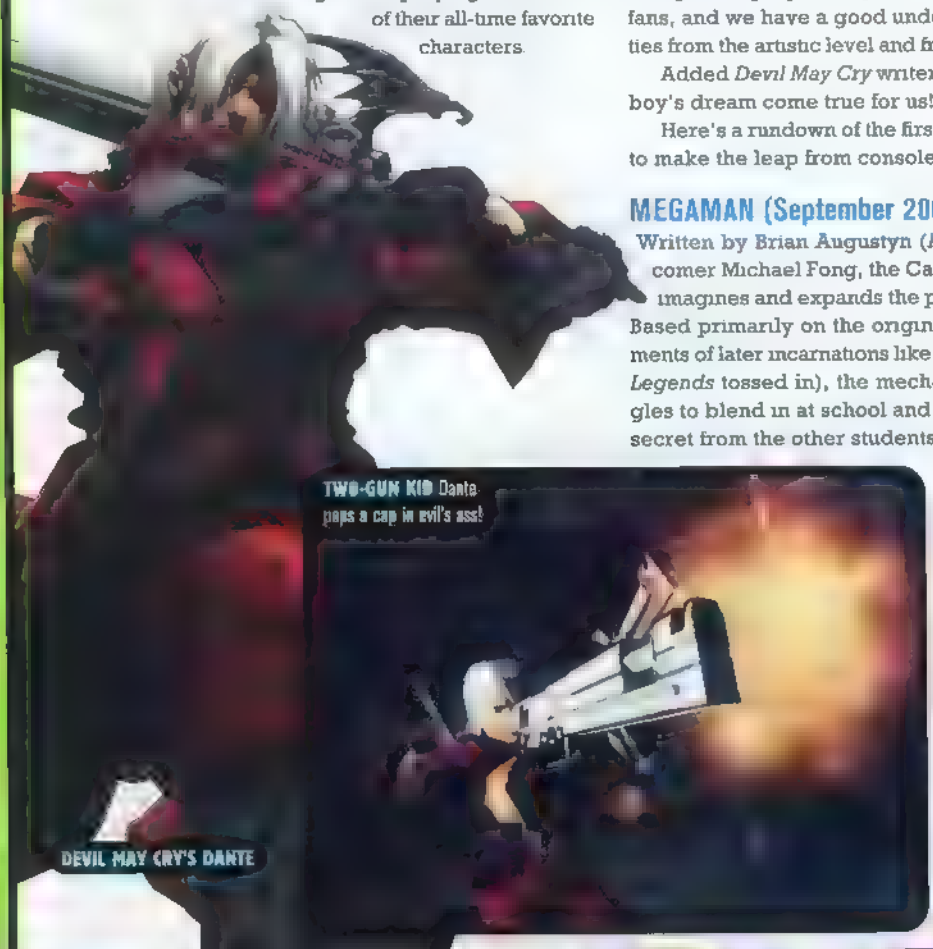
Added *Devil May Cry* writer Brad Mick, "This is a fanboy's dream come true for us!"

Here's a rundown of the first wave of Capcom classics to make the leap from consoles to comic book shops.

### MEGAMAN (September 2003)

Written by Brian Augustyn (*Hell*) with art by hot newcomer Michael Fong, the Capcom line's debut title reimagines and expands the popular Megaman mythos. Based primarily on the original games (with some elements of later incarnations like *Megaman X* and *Megaman Legends* tossed in), the mechanical boy wonder struggles to blend in at school and keep his robotic nature a secret from the other students in this ongoing series.

"We'll be playing with the whole Pinocchio theme," explained Augustyn. "He's trying to fit into the world of humans without being discovered as a robot. It's going to be fun and light—but with plenty of through-the-metal danger and action!" Expect appearances from familiar characters like Dr. Light, Rush, Protoman, Dr. Wiley and of course, all the evil boss robots you know and love.



**TWO-GUN KID** Dante pops a cap in evil's ass!

DEVIL MAY CRY'S DANTE

**SNEAK PEEK!** As *Final Fantasy X-2* edges closer to a PlayStation 2 near you, the fine folks at Square Enix have released a few more glimpses into Yuna and Rikku's upcoming adventure into the world of Spira. Feast your eyes on these screenshots from the "Final" frontier!

**MEETING OF THE MINDS** Rikku and Yuna are taken aback by one of *X-2*'s new cast members.

**WHOA** *FF* pretty-boy.

MEGA MAN

## DARKSTALKERS (October 2003)

Capcom's series of smash-hit supernatural fighting games gets a whole lot of brand-new backstory in this four-issue mini-series, courtesy of writer Beau Smith (*Wynonna Earp*) and artist Lou Kang (*Warlands*). "It's gonna be action packed with some brutal fighting, but I also wanna show the readers *why* these guys are fighting," noted Smith. To that end, the histories of characters like Demitri, Morrigan and the demon lord Jedah will at last be explored. "It's almost like a street gang battle for turf," Smith elaborated "Demons, monsters and other spooky things want Earth as their playground, and the good guys want to stop that from happening. Butts will be kicked, tails will be cut off, and horns will be locked "

## MAXIMO (October 2003)

Maximo, the butt-kicking warrior who tangles with the undead and hangs out with the Grim Reaper, stars in his very own one-shot, written by Beau Smith with art by Alan Wang (*Darkminds*). Smith—who also penned the script for the second Maximo video game—plans to incorporate elements from both the original and the sequel. "I'm going to haul as much of the game's story in as possible," confirmed the scribe.

## DEVIL MAY CRY (February 2004)

Wipe those tears away! The half-demon devil-hunter known as Dante flashes his pistols and swords in a three-issue mini-series by writer Brad Mick (*Transformers G1: War and Peace*) and artist extraordinaire Pat Lee (*Transformers G1*). "The series closely follows the story of the original PS2 title," said Mick. "We follow the exploits of Dante as he violently uncovers the truth about his past, present and ultimate destiny." The nonstop action and gothic atmosphere of the game will be preserved and enhanced with digitally painted art by Lee.

## RIVAL SCHOOLS: UNITED BY FATE: SPRING BREAK SPECTACULAR! (April 2004)

Beautiful girls and high-octane battles are the name of the game in this one-shot drawn by artist Rumil Sunga (*Skinners*) No writer has been assigned for this project, but you can bet that Tiffany, Kyoko, Hinata and the rest of the gang will be there. ■ **RICHARD HO**

# videorumblings

BITS AND BYTES!

**IMAGE GOES STREET-WALKIN'** UDON Studios has struck a deal with Image Comics to release a brand-new *Street Fighter* series starting in September, with a special preview book in August. Ken Siu-Chong (*Robotech*) will script the new series, with artwork by a rotating team including pencilers Alvin Lee (*Agent X*) and Arnold Tsang and colorist Andrew Hou (*Ultimate Daredevil & Elektra*).

**RPG, AHOY!** Ever wonder what it would be like to walk the plank? You'll get your chance in June, when Bethesda Softworks releases a *Pirates of the Caribbean* game for Xbox and PC! (A PlayStation 2 version will be released at a later date.) The revolutionary role-playing game will continue the swashbuckling adventures of the high seas Disney blockbuster, even letting you choose what kind of pirate you want to be—a cold-hearted mercenary or a heroic adventure-seeker!

**TAKIN' IT TO THE STREETS** Ryu and crew throw down.

**LEAVE YOUR HEART ON DANTOOINE** The universe is expanding! LucasArts announced that the 10th planetary environment for *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*, the highly anticipated first installment of the multiplayer online game, is none other than Dantooine, the former home base of the Rebel Alliance. Players will be able to explore the planet's vast terrain while encountering smugglers, the primitive Dantari and Imperial occupation forces. A release date for the game should be announced soon.

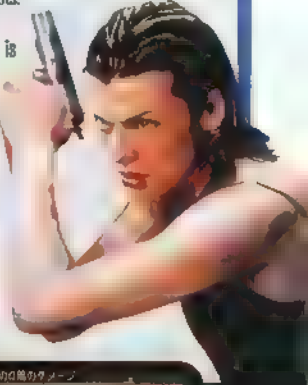
**HOLLYWOOD FAST TRACK**

Here's an update on some video game-based flicks currently in development:

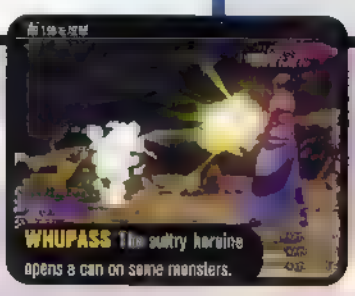
"Spy-Hunter" "2 Fast 2 Furious" screenwriters Michael Brandt and Derek Haas have been tapped to pen a script for the film adaptation of *Spy-Hunter*, the popular Midway arcade game of the '80s. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is attached to star as former F-15 pilot Alec Sects.

"Resident Evil: Apocalypse" Production is very much alive on this sequel, with an eye towards a mid-2004 release. Three new characters from the game (including Jill Valentine) are set to join Alice (Mila Jovovich, pictured at right) for the sequel. As for the story? Alice wakes up to find Raccoon City overtaken by zombies, which leads to plenty of shotgun-heavy action.

■ **THE WIZARD STAFF**



**THE SHIELDS GANNA' TAKE IT!** Yuna comes under fire.



**WHUPASS** The sultry heroine opens a can on some monsters.

**SURROUNDED!** Yuna finds herself alone in hostile territory.

# CAMPBELL IN THE BUFF

## J. Scott Campbell lends art to 'Buffy' video game sequel

Hot babes, outrageous baddies and butt-kickin' action. Sounds like a job for J. Scott Campbell!

When Vivendi Universal Games needed artwork for the upcoming *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds* video game, Vice President and Executive Producer Greg Goodrich went directly to the *Danger Girl* creator and babe-artist extraordinaire. "I've been a huge fan of his work since *Gen*$^{13}$," gushed Goodrich, "and I've collected pretty much everything he's ever published since then! His stuff just astounds me."

CAMPBELL...WOW, WHEN GOOD Buffy and the gang have never looked better.

Available for the PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox in August, *Chaos Bleeds* is a third-person perspective action game that features six playable characters: Buffy, Willow, Xander, Spike, Faith and Sid the Dummy—each with unique fighting abilities.

Writers Christopher Golden and Tom Sniegoski from the Dark Horse *Buffy* comic crafted the story as a "lost episode" that takes place late in the fifth season. Due to the side effects of shifting realities, Buffy and the rest of the Sunnydale gang face off against formerly dead friends and enemies while trying to discover what's causing the dimensional "bleed." The game also features in-game, real-time cinematic cut scenes with voice performances by all the actors from the show (except for Sarah Michelle Gellar).

As for Campbell's art? "The piece he did is absolutely amazing!" raved Goodrich. "It will certainly be the comic book cover and the game poster, and we're waiting for approval to use it as the box cover."

For Campbell, it was also a chance to do something new. "The big challenge was coming up with a piece of art that would look like me, but also appeal to people who aren't familiar with comic books," explained Campbell. "So I went the movie poster route and tried to get a painted look. And I was thrilled that they were happy with the result!" ■ RH

# THE FACE OF EVIL

## Jim Lee creates the ultimate Bat-baddie

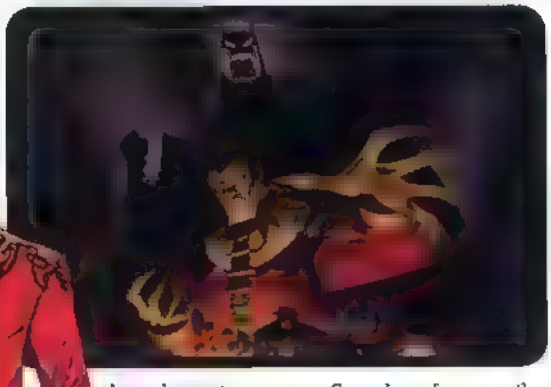
The Dark Knight's most dangerous adversary debuts this fall—but it won't be in the pages of *Batman*.

The fearsome Sin Tzu wages war against Gotham's guardian in *Batman: The Rise of Sin Tzu*, the latest video game from Ubi Soft Entertainment. Scheduled for release this fall, the action-adventure game will be available for PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube and GameBoy Advance. *The Rise of Sin Tzu* makes history as the first video game to introduce a major new character into the Bat-universe.

And who better to design Batman's ultimate villain than Jim Lee, the man with the magic pencil on DC's red-hot monthly *Batman* title?

The superstar artist signed on as Sin Tzu's character designer when former WildStorm cohort and current DC V.P. of Business Development John Nee approached him with the idea. "He knew about my passion for video games, so he wanted to get me involved," said Lee. "They had already scripted what was going to happen in the game, but they hadn't fleshed out the villain or come up with a visual. We [Lee and the game's writer Flint Dille] sort of brainstormed ideas about a villain who's equal to Batman in ability, a guy who's very imperious and strategic-minded."

From there, the duo came up with the fiercely intelligent Sin Tzu, a master of warfare driven by a desire to conquer. Searching for a worthy opponent, he arrives in Gotham City to take down Batman.



SIN TZU

Lee's designs were then translated into a 3-D polygon model—which led to an interesting discovery. "I realized that when I draw, I don't draw three-dimensionally!" said Lee. "If you take a drawing of mine and do a turnaround, with a front, side and back view, nothing really matches up. So it was tough trying to maintain my style and still have it be something that could be translated into a 3-D model!"

*Batman: The Rise of Sin Tzu* boasts several unique features, including an arsenal of 38 martial arts attacks, locations like the Gotham City Docks and Arkham Asylum, and a two-player cooperative gameplay mode that allows a second player to join the fray as Nightwing, Robin or Batgirl. ■ RH

# 'TOON TUNES

## Hot-selling soundtracks reveal the musical side of anime

In Japan, anime soundtracks are big business. No matter if it's a theme song, instrumental score or "inspired by" amalgam, fans just can't buy the CDs fast enough.

Unlike record stores in the U.S., Japanese stores devote entire sections—huge ones—to anime soundtracks and stock everything from big-budget fare like "Spirited Away," to lower profile releases like "Fruits Basket," and even age-old tunes from black-and-white classics like "Astro Boy." Right now, however, you'd be hard-pressed to find even a half-dozen anime CDs at your local Best Buy.

Without monster chains buying into the audio facet of the anime industry, fans have been forced to turn to the burgeoning soundtrack import industry in order to secure their favorite albums.

"As far as the worldwide market is concerned, the demand for [anime soundtracks] has been there for many years. It's kind of a natural extension that it came over here to America," explained Ken Wiatrek, Director of Marketing for A.D. Vision, Inc. "As anime fandom has grown here in America, so has the demand for everything anime, including soundtracks."

And even though the words may be in Japanese, the music knows no language barrier. "Music is universal. So even if you can't understand the words, you can still hum along or sing along," said Kathie Borders, President of Wizzy Wig (**www.wizzywig.com**), a warehouse for all things anime located in Ann Arbor, Mich. "People are compelled to play the music in their car or when they're traveling or when they're out and about, because it's the [music] they enjoy hearing so much on TV or in a movie."

The demand for anime soundtracks may be skyrocketing, but the supply remains virtually non-existent. Online retailers like Japanimation (**www.japanimation.com**) and Anime Toxic (**www.animetoxic.com**) carry a decent number of titles, but their selection is sporadic at best. Ther are always conventions and specialty stores, but due to limited shelf space, most titles require an expensive special order. Online auctions—stocked primarily with fans' used discs—are always an option. The danger being that few controls exist to ensure quality or protect from inferior (and illegal) bootlegs.

Then there's the question of price. With discs typically ranging from $10 to upwards of several hundred, depending on rarity, purchasing an anime soundtrack is almost always an expensive proposition.

Thankfully, that urge to listen will soon be a lot easier to satisfy. Due to the efforts of a handful of anime distributors—ADV, Pioneer, The Right Stuf and TOKYOPOP—fans will no longer have to scour the Internet to find their favorite titles. ADV recently announced the formation of its ADV Music label, and the newly founded company is set to release "Super Atragon" and "All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku" discs on June 3, with more soundtracks to follow. The Right Stuf's AnimeTrax line has already been involved in producing and releasing anime soundtracks domestically, including titles like "Macross Plus," "Slayers" and "Samurai X." Pioneer also plans to follow ADV's lead by releasing their own material stateside.

Clearly, the market for anime tunes will only keep expanding as domestic releases become more and more common.

"Being able to provide loyal fans with greater access to anime soundtracks at a more affordable price is a primary driving force behind our soundtrack strategy," noted Chad Benesh, Director of Marketing at TOKYOPOP. If he has his way, stores like Sam Goody will soon be stocking hundreds of discs for a mere $12 to $14 each—so you better start warming up your stereo.

■ **JON M. GIBSON**

**SPIRITED JAZZ** The rich orchestral sounds of "Spirited Away" (left) and the funky jazz of "Cowboy Bebop" (above) prove that anime is more than just pretty pictures.

# ANIME BUZZBOX

**BILL THRILL** Production I.G., the animation studio behind anime classics such as "Ghost in the Shell" and "Jin-Roh," has announced that it will be providing 10 minutes of animation for the Quentin Tarantino action movie "Kill Bill," which hits theaters in November. Rumor has it that the animation will be for an in-movie TV show featuring five female assassins–Fox Force Five, perhaps?

UMA THURMAN IN "KILL BILL"

**BRAND-NEW SCROLL** The wait is almost over for fans of Toho's 1995 bloodfest "Ninja Scroll," which drew a whole new audience to anime after repeated airings on MTV. In a strange twist, the 13-episode sequel series will have its American DVD debut this fall through Urban Vision, several months before the series debuts in Japan!

**POLL SITTERS** The April 10 edition of the Japanese newspaper *The Daily Yomiuri* ran the results of a *Nikkei Entertainment Magazine* poll asking 10,000 Japanese adults which anime characters they would most like to be. The most common responses: Lupin and Fujiko from Pioneer's "Lupin III." A jet-setting thief and a con artist who seduces men to get at their money...who says the Japanese are repressed?

LUPIN III

**AURA OF MYSTERY** It's madness and motocross in "Aura Battler Dunbine," a classic anime series from the '80s that's coming to the U.S. for the first time courtesy of ADV. The 49-episode series from Yoshiyuki Tomino (creator and director of "Mobile Suit Gundam") follows motocross rider Sho Zama who wakes up in the fantastically bizarre world of Byston Well after a seemingly deadly accident. Almost immediately he's recruited to pilot a giant mecha battlesuit called an "Aura Battler" against strange, unknown enemies. And things only get weirder from there. Look for the first DVD to hit stores in July.

**WORLDS OF WONDER** Dark Horse will be releasing two of Osama Tezuka's earlier works as trade paperbacks later this year. Due in stores in July, *Lost World* follows a team of scientists as they explore a planet on a collision course with Earth while battling dinosaurs and a band of criminal stowaways. *Future World* tells the offbeat story of a group of animals given extraordinary powers created by nuclear testing. Look for the first volume in September, followed by Vol. 2 in October. ■ JOE GOTTLIEB

LOST WORLD

# TOKYOPOP WANTS YOU!

## Aspiring creators play with the big boys

Want to make your own manga? Of course you do. Want to see that manga being sold in book and comic stores across the country? That practically goes without saying. Well, thanks to TOKYOPOP's "Rising Stars of Manga" contest, now you can!

Last year's winners, Priscilla Hamby and Clint Bickham, were just two ambitious *otaku* until TOKYOPOP got it's hands on them. Their ominously titled story *Devil's Candy*, a comedic tale of teenage monsters and their high school-horror hijinks, took top honors and guaranteed them a spot, along with the work of nine other talented fans, in the *Rising Stars of Manga Anthology*, in stores now. And if getting their story printed wasn't enough, Hamby and Bickham also took home a whopping $2,500 in prize money!

"With only a few pages to work with, we decided to do something immediately accessible that anyone could pick up and enjoy," said Bickman. "*Devil's Candy* puts an interesting spin on what can be considered a 'typical' manga story." Clearly, TOKYOPOP agreed. Thanks to the contest, the duo have been offered a panel at Anime Expo 2003 (held in Anaheim, Calif., July 3-6) and asked to submit a short story for the new anime magazine *Asia Blue*.

Most manga offered in the U.S. is translated from Japanese, but with a new wave of American creators adopting the Japanese style and aesthetic, that might soon change. "What we've done is create a book that will support both writers and artists," explained TOKYOPOP editor Mark Paniccia. "This is a way to find material for original projects, which is a new focus for the company."

This year's contest begins June 1 and ends on September 1 (check out the Website at **www.tokyopop.com** for entry details), so all you aspiring manga creators out there had best start putting pen to paper if you want to be TOKYOPOP's next rising star! ■ TODD CASEY

**WAIT...WE WON?** A self-portrait of last year's winners, Clint Bickham (left) and Priscilla Hamby (right).

# HOT IMPORTS

## MANGA

**COURAGEOUS PRINCESS MASTERPIECE EDITION (Antarctic Press)** All three volumes of the Eisner-nominated, fairy-tale adventures of Princess Mabelrose collected for the first time. $24.95

**ONE PIECE VOL. 1 ROMANCE DAWN TP (Viz)** Monkey D. Luffy has always wanted to be a pirate. Not even a curse that keeps him from swimming is enough to deter him from taking to the high seas in search of the legendary "One Piece" pirate treasure. $7.95

**THE SLAYERS SPECIAL BOOK 2: NOTORIOUS GN (Central Park Media)** Lina and Naga are it again as they journey to a crazy fantasy world filled with ninjas, clones and lovesick fanboys. Sounds like a typical day at the office for us. $15.95

## ANIME

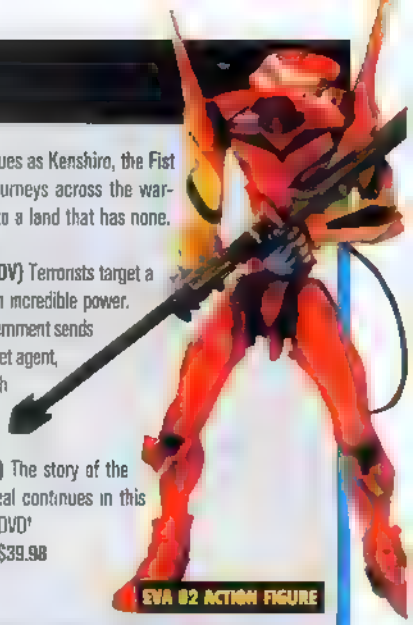
**CHOBITS VOL. 3: DARKNESS DESCENDS (Pioneer)** Hideki gets ready for his first date with Yumi—and Chi is most certainly not invited. DVD—$29.98

**COWBOY BEBOP: KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR (Columbia Tri-Star)** The long-anticipated "Cowboy Bebop" movie has arrived! A feature-length running time and groundbreaking animation makes this one of the must-have animes of the year. DVD—$27.95

**FIST OF THE NORTH STAR VOL. 3 AND 4 (Manga Entertainment)** The post-apocalyptic saga continues as Kenshiro, the Fist of the North Star himself, journeys across the war-torn wastes to bring justice to a land that has none. (July) DVDs—$24.95 each

**FULL METAL PANIC VOL. 1 (ADV)** Terrorists target a young girl believed to wield an incredible power. In order to protect her, the government sends Sousuke Sagara, a hotshot secret agent, to infiltrate her school and watch over her clandestinely. DVD—$29.98 COLL. ED. DVD—$44.98

**.HACK//SIGN VOL. 3 (Bandai)** The story of the game that became all-too real continues in this action-packed, mind-bending DVD! DVD—$29.98 COLL. ED. DVD—$39.98



EVA 02 ACTION FIGURE

## STUFF

**LOVE HINA: NARU IN TOWEL RESIN STATUE (Tokyo Mint)** Naru Narusagawa of "Love Hina" was nice enough to pose for this statue right out of the shower. Limited to only 600 pieces, this 9-inch tall resin statue would look great on any bachelor's shelf (September) $129.99

**EVA 02 MOVIE VERSION ACTION FIGURE (Kaiyodo)** The "End of Evangelion" movie saw one of the most over-the-top, mind-blowing fight scenes ever put to film. Now you can bring it to life with the EVA 02 figure taken straight from the movie! (July) $17.99

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? STORY IDEAS? DROP US A LINE AT
MANGAMANIA@WIZARDUNIVERSE.COM

# ESCA-FLOWIN'

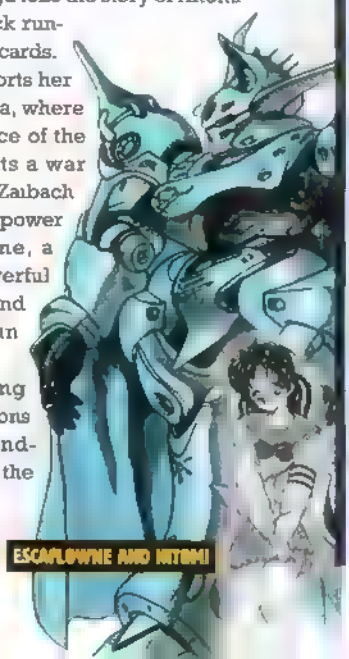
## TOKYOPOP sees a *Vision of Escaflowne*

TOKYOPOP is going with the flow this summer.

This July, the publisher will orchestrate the American release of Volume 1 of *The Vision of Escaflowne*, the manga written by Aki Katsu based on the acclaimed anime of the same name. The 26-episode series, created by Hajime Yadate and Shoji Kawamori, first aired in Japan in 1996. Then in 2000, "Escaflowne" debuted to rave reviews here in the United States on the Fox Kids block.

Like the anime, the manga tells the story of Hitomi Hoshino, a high school track runner with a penchant for tarot cards. Her occult dabbling transports her to the fantastic world of Gaea, where Van Fanel, the young prince of the kingdom of Fanelia, fights a war against the evil forces of the Zaibach empire. Only Hitomi can empower the legendary Escaflowne, a mecha that's the most powerful weapon in all of Fanelia, and save the realm from certain destruction.

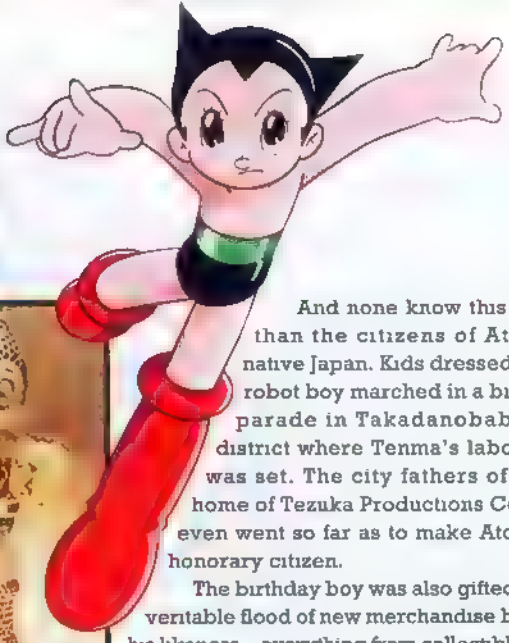
TOKYOPOP's reprinting will feature English translations and maintain the black-and-white, right-to-left format of the original. ■ RICHARD HO



ESCAFLOWNE AND HITOMI

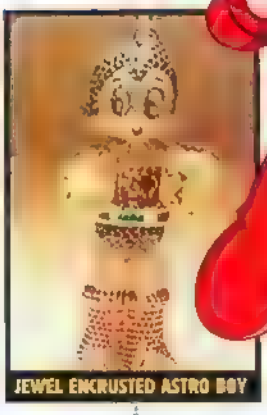
# A STAR IS BORN

## Japan celebrates the birth of Astro Boy



While us Yankees were slogging through our daily routine, the entire nation of Japan was throwing a party—a birthday party for the most important character in anime and manga history, to be precise.

April 7, 2003 was the date that creator Osamu Tezuka set for the "birth" of the android boy in his series *Tetsuwan Atom* (Astro Boy). Built by Professor Tenma (Boynton) to replace his dead son, Atomu (Astro) was sold to the circus and eventually bought by yet another kindly professor who urged the android to use his powers to fight evil.



JEWEL ENCRUSTED ASTRO BOY

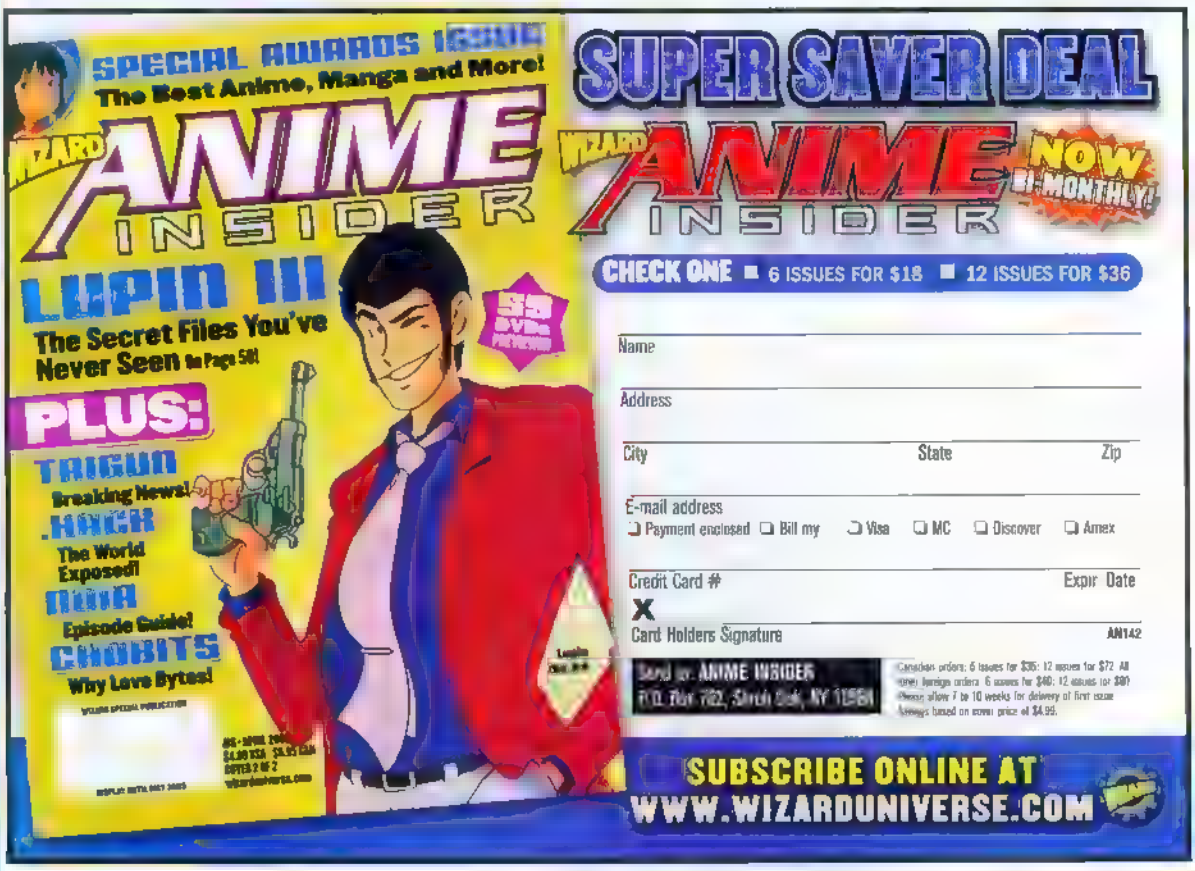
A wildly successful comic strip in the 1950s, Astro Boy's adventures couldn't be contained on the printed page, and he soon made the leap to the small screen. The 1963 TV series was one of the first animated series to be produced in Japan and proved so popular that it almost single-handedly ignited Japan's first big animation explosion and had an immeasurable impact on pop culture history. "*Astro Boy* is the foundation for the manga and anime industries, industries that are quintessentially influential in so many forms of today's popular media, including animation, comics, games and toys," explained Chris Warner, editor of the *Astro Boy* manga reprint series from Dark Horse.

And none know this better than the citizens of Atomu's native Japan. Kids dressed as the robot boy marched in a birthday parade in Takadanobaba, the district where Tenma's laboratory was set. The city fathers of Niiza, home of Tezuka Productions Co. Ltd., even went so far as to make Atomu an honorary citizen.

The birthday boy was also gifted with a veritable flood of new merchandise bearing his likeness—everything from collectible coins and food products to lacy undergarments and children's underwear. Still, the most over-the-top (and certainly the most expensive) of all the memorabilia was undoubtedly the one-of-a-kind, gem-studded Astro Boy statue worth approximately 1 billion yen ($8.3 million in American dollars).

Tezuka Productions and co-producer Sony Entertainment hope that the renewed interest in the character will also lead to high ratings for the new TV series that premiered on April 6, and big box office for the upcoming movie, slated to debut in Japan by Christmas 2004.

Not too shabby—for a little kid. ■ TRISHA SEBASTIAN

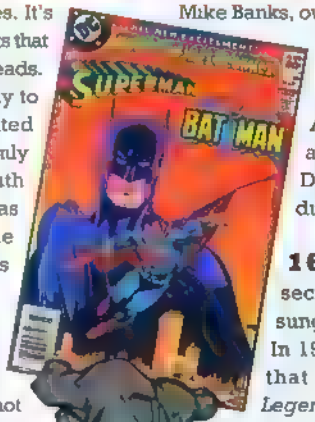
# 'NET GAINS

# FOUR GONE CONCLUSION

## The summer forecast calls for sizzling heat from a quartet of back issues

Forget about this summer's hot new titles. It's their long-forgotten "Earth-2" counterparts that are really guaranteed to turn fanboys' heads.

Just as Alan Scott and Jay Garrick gave way to Hal Jordan and Barry Allen, the most anticipated books arriving this summer have their roots firmly entrenched in a slough of earlier titles. And with the buzz building on such upcoming projects as *Superman/Batman* and *1602*, the back issue demand for the books that spawned those series is set to explode!




**SUPERMAN/BATMAN** Jeph Loeb and Ed McGuinness' new ongoing series teams the two icons in one book, but newer fanboys might not even be aware that Supes and Bats first got together every month in DC's *World's Finest*.

"With Superman's appearance in Jim Lee's *Batman*, people are already talking," explained Kevin McGarry, owner of Acme Comics in Sioux City, Iowa. "The new book will push the price up across the board for [*World's Finest*'s] entire run."

But fans don't have to go too far back to get their Supes/Bats team-up fix. "The *World's Finest* mini-series [from 1990] by Steve Rude will definitely see some increased interest because that's still in recent memory and in continuity," noted Stan Daniel, manager of Captain Comics in Homewood, Ala. "In the original series, Superman and Batman were like, 'Hi buddy! Hi friend!' It's weird to even think of them like that now."

**SUPREME POWER** The Squadron Supreme star in J. Michael Straczynski's new Marvel/MAX series, but the definitive Squadron story was told with writer Mark Gruenwald's still affordable 12-issue maxi-series from 1985-86.

"Anyone who gets into the new book will want that old series," said Mike Banks, owner of Samurai Comics in Phoenix, Ariz. "The story and art will appeal to the modern-day fan."

"One book that'll really spike is *Avengers* (vol. 1) #85 featuring the first appearance of the Squadron," added Daniel. "It's still affordable and overdue for a price increase."

**1602** Uber-writer Neil Gaiman's ultra-secret Marvel series isn't the first time the sunglassed one has tackled superheroes. In 1988, Gaiman submitted a script to DC that became *Green Lantern/Superman: Legend of the Green Flame*, finally published in 2000 as a Prestige Format one-shot.

"If I had any of those, I could sell them easily side by side with *1602*," declared Jerry Ringi, owner of Amazing Fantasy Comics in Chesapeake, Va. "I'm not sure a lot of people are even aware it exists."

**G.I. JOE/TRANSFORMERS** Marvel originally published a *G.I. Joe and the Transformers* mini-series in 1986, which will almost surely be sought after when the new crossovers, from Devil's Due/Image and Dreamwave, respectively, hit stores.

"When *Transformers: Generation 1* came out, everyone wanted anything from the old Marvel series," said Daniel. "With the old [*G.I. Joe/Transformers*] mini, we'll see a decent price spike because it's a completist thing."

"I would love to have that mini-series in my store," said McGarry. "I guarantee I could sell it 10 times over in seconds if I had it."

All in all, the summer of 2003 is shaping up to be a big one for readers and retailers alike. "With all the buzz on the new books, the back issue market for those earlier titles is going to benefit across the board," lauded Banks. "I just wish I had more of them in stock!" ■ JIM AREHART

**POWER PACKED** *Supreme Power*, starring Hyperion (pictured) and the Squadron Supreme, will boost back issue sales of other Squadron stories. *World's Finest* back issues will have a higher profile thanks to *Superman/Batman*.

# TITANIC TITLES WORTH TRACKING

Be on the lookout for a massive youth movement in the back issue bins this summer.

With the highly anticipated relaunch of *Teen Titans* by Geoff Johns and Mike McKone hitting in July, collectors will be scouring bins looking for hot collectibles, and *Wizard* has the scoop on Titans back issues to watch!

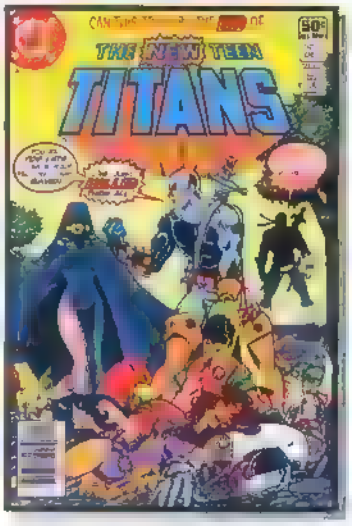
Aside from big-ticket issues like *Brave and the Bold* #54 (the Titans' first appearance, currently worth $375) and *Brave and the Bold* #60 (their second appearance, $120), read on for the cheaper Titans books you gotta pick up now!

**DC COMICS PRESENTS #26** The New Teen Titans, who would go on to star in DC's top-selling title of the '80s, make their first appearance here. The new series should spark interest in Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's beloved Titans lineup **CURRENT VALUE: $20**

**TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT #13** This issue (left), featuring a face-off between Cyborg and Two-Face, boasts the honor of presiding as J. Michael Straczynski's first comic book work. While there are no other Titans tales in JMS' immediate future, this book's an overlooked gem. **CURRENT VALUE: $3**

**NEW TEEN TITANS (VOL. 1) #2** Marking the first appearance of Deathstroke the Terminator, fans will be searching for this issue (right) as Geoff Johns has said that Deathstroke will return to his heinous nature and be a major thorn in the Titans' collective side in the new series. **CURRENT VALUE: $7.50**

**JLA: WORLD WITHOUT GROWNUPS #1** This ish features the first team-up of Robin, Superboy and Impulse—otherwise known as the new Teen Titans. "If you're going to invest," advised Shawn Hamilton, comic department manager at The Great Escape in Nashville, Tenn., "you can never go wrong with a first appearance." **CURRENT VALUE: $5**




**TITANS ANNUAL #1** Before the new *Teen Titans* series was a twinkle in Johns' eye, he penned this 2000 annual, his first work on characters like Cyborg and Starfire. Since they'll play major mentor roles in *Teen Titans*, look for Johns' first crack at them to enjoy a price hike. **CURRENT VALUE: $3.50**

What are you waiting for? While some of these key Titans books may be tough to find, most of them have ended up in quarter boxes at [illegible]

# UPS & DOWNS

MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN THE INDUSTRY

**CHEAP COMICS** They may not cost a dime, but Marvel hasn't been slacking off when it comes to pocket-change comics. On the heels of 25-cent issues of *Daredevil*, *Uncanny X-Men* and *Namor*, Marvel follows the trend with June's *Incredible Hulk* #55! Stealing milk money's never paid off so well!

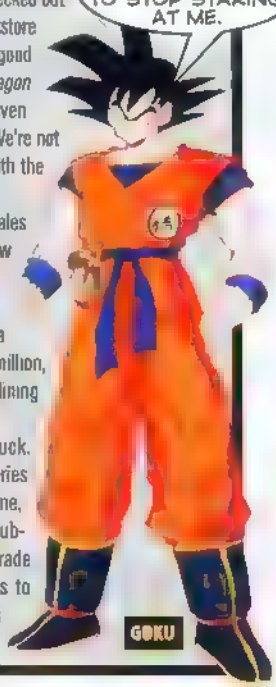
**ACTION COMICS #800** While sales of the Superman books have been sluggish as of late, the *Action* #800 anniversary issue has flown outta stores on par with a speeding bullet. The self-contained story, featuring contributions from such super-artists as Tim Sale, Ed McGuinness and Alex Ross, has already hit a premium in many areas, so be on the lookout for its entry into the Hot 10 Comics!

**METAL MEN** We know Geoff Johns loves superteams, but things are starting to get ridiculous. The *Avengers*, *JSA* and *Teen Titans* writer has signed on to pen a script for an upcoming "Metal Men" flick from Warner Bros.! If this announcement doesn't clear those old Silver Age *Metal Men* issues out of dusty bins, we don't know what will!

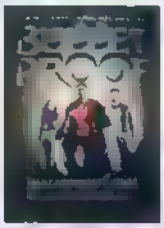
**MANGA SALES IN AMERICA** Have you checked out the trade paperback selection at your local bookstore lately? If so, you've probably noticed that a good half of the titles offered are manga books! *Dragon Ball Z* remains a big draw, and *Love Hina* even cracked the Top 50 paperback sellers recently. We're not talkin' a TPB list, either—it's going toe to toe with the likes of Stephen King and Tom Clancy!

**MANGA SALES IN JAPAN** Sure, manga sales that number in the millions are nothing to blow off, but Japan seems to be in the midst of its own comic recession. In the mid-'90s, the top manga titles sold around 6 million copies a month; today, their sales number around 3.2 million, as 2002 was the seventh straight year of declining manga sales in Japan.

**SWAMP THING** There's money in muck. Back issues of the original *Swamp Thing* series experienced a price hike for two reasons: One, DC brought attention to this series by finally publishing the last of the Alan Moore stories in trade paperback, and two, news of Moore's plans to retire from comics has collectors seeking his greatest hits.



# Comics by the Numbers: THE TICKER



**11,749,291**
Estimated amount MGM's "Bulletproof Monk" (based on the 1999 Image mini-series) made in its first five days of release

**30,000**
Amount, in dollars, an Epic creative team can earn for a single issue if their book sells over 100,000 copies

**3,550**
Amount, in dollars, an Adam Kubert Free Comic Book Day in-store signing (sponsored by Wizard Entertainment and Dynamic Forces to benefit the National Childhood Cancer Foundation) sold for online

**40**
Number of ongoing series Marvel will publish in July 2003

**12**
Number of film festivals "The Month of August," written by *Witchblade* artist Scott Benefiel, has been entered in

**9**
Number of awards it has won, including best screenplay and best feature

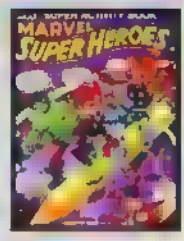
**4**
Number of Hulk comics shipping in June (*Incredible Hulk* #55 and #56, *Hulk: The Movie Adaptation*, *Hulk: Nightmerica* #1)

**3**
Number of titles the film sequel to "Spider-Man" has had so far ("The Amazing Spider-Man," "Spider-Man: The Sequel," "Spider-Man 2")

**0**
Number of North Carolina state parks that have given *Venom* writer Daniel Way permission to throw a pre-Heroes Con cookout bash

# SOLD ONLINE

**COLOR WARS** There's something disturbing about the sight of Captain America and Thor straddling a giant pencil that's soaring through space, especially when they seem to be enjoying it so much. This Marvel Fun n' Games Coloring Book (right, sold for $5) also features the Hulk, who presumably feels like a third wheel with Cap and Thor having such a good time.




**AIR KENTS** Hey, remember when you were a toddler and your mommy bought you that pair of Size 2 Superman Sneakers? No? That's because you've blocked the memory from your brain since those "harmless" shoes (left, featuring an adorable baby-like Supes on the sides) inspired you to jump off the roof and break your leg. Relive the pain for $1.59.

**PARKER POOL PARTY** Important rule of thumb, kids; always wait half an hour after being bitten by a radioactive spider before swimming. With that in mind, does this Spider-Man-themed plastic kiddie pool (which had an asking price of $5,000 online) seem like such a good idea? Hydro-Man could crash the party at any time, Aunt May could drag out her old bikini, etc.

**HALLMARK HOWARD** For the last 17 years, we've lived through the "Howard the Duck" movie debacle with no lame merchandising tie-ins left over to remind us of that horrible summer of '86. Until now. This lot of "Howard the Duck" Greeting Cards (featuring shots of Howard in football gear and pining after Bev, left) scrounged up $3.33 from one fowl bidder.

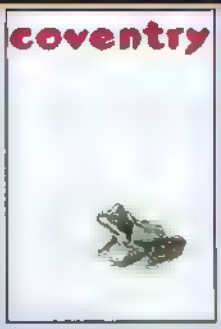
**MAKE MY DAY, SKULL** Just call him Steve "Callahan." For a brief period in the 1970s, Captain America was all about the right to bear arms. Before Charlton Heston ever brandished a rifle on national television, Cap was urging youngsters to buy his "Official Military Patrol" Captain America Gun and Badge Set, one of which sold online for $40.

**TELL US** about your weird online findings! Send photos, etc. to:
SOLD ONLINE
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920

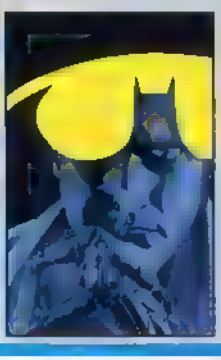
# TREASURE HUNT

## IN BACK-ISSUE BINS

Long before Bill Willingham created DC/Vertigo's *Fables*, the writer experimented with similar themes and ideas with *Coventry*, a 1997 three-issue series from Fantagraphics. Set in "The Magic State" of Coventry, the series incorporated such *Fables*-esque elements as a supernatural troubleshooter named Claudia Nevermore (who bears a striking resemblance to *Fables*' Snow White), a town called Pandora that's chock full of imps and shoe houses (think Fabletown) and even a humanoid werewolf (Bigby Wolf, anyone?). With back issues of *Fables* still all the rage with us mundys, expect issues of *Coventry* to soar past their $4 values–and that's no fairy tale.




## ON THE COMIC RACKS



Artist John Cassaday broke into the comics mainstream last year when he reinvigorated *Captain America*. So what he does he do for a follow-up? Tackle Batman, natch! Cassaday hooks up with his current *Planetary* collaborator writer Warren Ellis, for June's *Planetary/Batman: Night on Earth* Prestige Format one-shot from WildStorm/DC. When *Planetary*'s Archaeologists of the Unknown track a killer to Gotham City, you know Bats ain't gonna like interdimensional meddlers on his turf. Fans have been itching to see Cassaday's interpretation of other heroes, but with a hefty $5.95 price tag, *Planetary/Batman* will be under-ordered. Grab it come June 25 before it hits a premium!

# ATTACK

Whenever anyone talks about *Ultimate Spider-Man*, it's always "Bendis this" and "Bendis that." He may write some of the best dialogue in the business, but it's artists Mark Bagley (penciler) and Art Thibert (inker) who bring the characters to life.

And there's only one place to get your *Ultimate Spidey* original art fix. The Artists' Choice (**www.theartistschoice.com**)

Artists' Choice provides listings for every piece of original art ever produced for the series, with high-resolution scans so you can see the pages before committing to a purchase. The site lists prices as well, with out-of-costume pages generally selling for between $60 and $80, splashes going for $500 to $1,000 and covers costing anywhere from $900 to $1,500. The art doesn't rest on the virtual shelf for long–*Ultimate Spider-Man* pages are made available online the day the book hits the stands.

"For the most part, any of the character pages or really good splash pages go real fast," explained art dealer Spencer Beck, proprietor of The Artists' Choice. "Most highly desirable pages are gone by the first day."

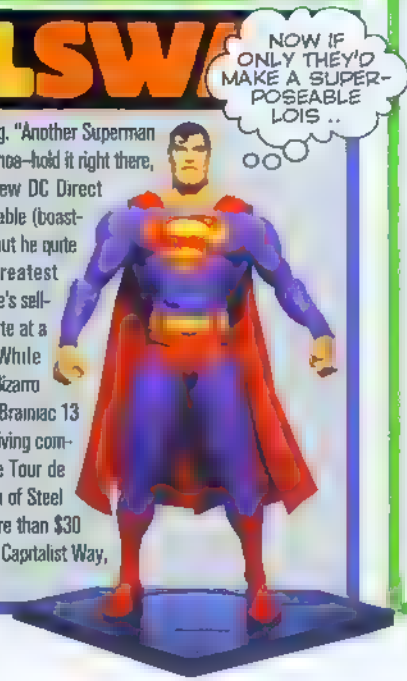
Which makes it difficult, but not impossible, to score some primo Peter Parker pages.

"Get the order in as soon as humanly possible," Beck advised. "Make sure that there's a description there so the page numbers don't get mismatched. All pages and e-mails are answered in the order they were received–first come first served."

*Ultimate X-Men* fans take note: Adam Kubert doesn't sell his artwork, but inker Art Thibert does, thus making The Artists' Choice one of the only places to buy artwork from the high-octane mutant drama ■ **JOSHUA ELDER**

# COOLSW

PRETTY STUFF THAT'S WORTH MONEY

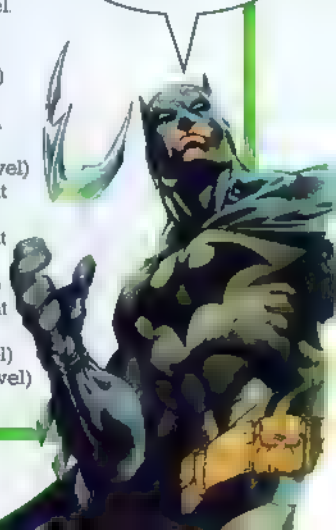



We know what you're thinking. "Another Superman figure? Wow, how original." Whoa–hold it right there, pallie. Not only is this all-new DC Direct Modern Age Supes super-posable (boasting 21 points of articulation), but he quite possibly could be the greatest Superman toy ever made as he's selling faster than green kryptonite at a Legion of Doom reunion. While Superman's dim-witted clone Bizarro and the biker shorts-wearing Brainiac 13 (he's supposed to be a killer living computer, not a competitor in the Tour de France!) gather dust, the Man of Steel himself routinely goes for more than $30 online. Truth, Justice and the Capitalist Way, good citizens!

# TOP50

THE BEST-SELLERS OF MARCH

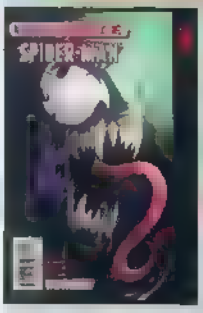
1. (*1*) Batman #613 (DC)
**Writer Jeph Loeb on the continued success of *Batman*: "I'm delighted and amazed and give more than the lion's share to my partner Jim Lee, who just drew the hell out of the story in ways that surprised me. I very much hold the second half up even higher than the first."**
2. (*5*) Ultimate Spider Man #38 (Marvel)
3. (*5*) Ultimate Spider-Man #37 (Marvel)
4. (*3*) Ultimates #9 (RES) (Marvel)
5. (*4*) Amazing Spider-Man #51 (Marvel)
6. (*6*) New X Men #138 (Marvel)
7. (*7*) Ultimate X-Men #30 (Marvel)
8. (*8*) Uncanny X-Men #420 (Marvel)
9. (*9*) Wolverine #187 (Marvel)
10. (*9*) Wolverine #188 (Marvel)
11. (*12*) JLA #79 (DC)
12. (*11*) X-Treme X-Men #22 (Marvel)
13. (-) Marvel Universe: The End #1 (Marvel)
14. (*11*) X Treme X Men #23 (Marvel)
15. (*17*) Avengers #65 (Marvel)
16. (-) Spider-Man: Blue #6 (RES) (Marvel)
17. (-) Marvel Universe: The End #2 (Marvel)
18. (*14*) Incredible Hulk #51 (Marvel)
19. (*10*) Transformers: The War Within #6 (Dreamwave Productions)
20. (*20*) Fantastic Four #67 (Marvel)
21. (*19*) Green Arrow #22 (DC)
22. (*18*) Captain America #10 (Marvel)
23. (*18*) Captain America #11 (Marvel)
24. (*21*) Peter Parker: Spider-Man #54 (Marvel)
25. (*24*) G I. Joe #15 (Devil's Due/Image)
26. (*22*) Transformers: Armada #9 (Dreamwave Productions)
27. (*30*) JSA #46 (DC)
28. (*23*) Truth #5 (Marvel)
29. (*27*) Punisher #23 (Marvel)
30. (*32*) Spawn #123 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)
31. (*28*) Masters of the Universe #4 (MV Creations/Image)
32. (*31*) Detective Comics #780 (DC)
33. (*26*) Thundercats: The Return #2 (WildStorm/DC)
34. (*36*) G.I. Joe: Frontline #5 (Devil's Due/Image)
35. (*35*) Green Lantern #160 (DC)
36. (*34*) Aquaman #4 (DC)
37. (-) Captain America: What Price Glory #1 (Marvel)
38. (*35*) Green Lantern #161 (DC)
39. (-) X-Men 2 Movie Prequel Wolverine (Marvel)
40. (*37*) Exiles #23 (Marvel)
41. (*39, 40*) Thor #61 (Marvel)
42. (*37*) Exiles #24 (Marvel)
43. ( ) JLA: Scary Monsters #1 (DC)
44. ( ) X-Men: Ronin #1 (Marvel)
45. (-) Captain America: What Price Glory #2 (Marvel)
46. (-) Captain America: What Price Glory #3 (Marvel)
47. (*46*) Superman #191 (DC)
48. (-) Captain America: What Price Glory #4 (Marvel)
49. (*42*) Iron Man #66 (Marvel)
50. (-) X Men: Ronin #2 (Marvel)



# HOT 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

## 1 ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #33



**WRITER:** Brian Michael Bendis
**ARTISTS:** Mark Bagley & Art Thibert

Much like real poison, this Venom stays in the system for months after initial ingestion! Even though the storyline has since wrapped, *Ultimate Spider-Man* #33's still on our top spot because of the first appearance of Ultimate Eddie Brock/Venom, who has quickly risen to become Ultimate Spidey's top villain thanks to the family connection between Peter and Eddie. And of course, the new *Venom* ongoing series has only helped add heat to this already blazing ish, currently valued at $10. **LAST MONTH:** 1

## 2 BATMAN #612 (2ND PRINT)

**WRITER:** Jeph Loeb
**ARTISTS:** Jim Lee & Scott Williams

Holy crap, a second print has actually surpassed a first print in terms of hotness! Instead of having Jim Lee do an all-new cover for the second printing, Jeph Loeb suggested DC go with Lee's original uncolored pencil art for the cover. Fans flipped out, making for a hot first-time entry on the list. And it also doesn't hurt that this ish featured a kickass fight between Batman and Superman. Just call Lee and Loeb the Midas Bros., 'cuz everything they touch turns to gold! **LAST MONTH: N.R. (Not Rated)**

## 3 BATMAN: HUSH [SECOND EDITION]

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTISTS: Jim Lee & Scott Williams

*Batman* continues to dominate the back market, much as it has ruled the top spot on the Diamond Top 100 list of late! With only 200 of these retailer-incentive copies in existence–sporting a variant cover by Lee–this book is harder to find than a virgin on prom night and costs about the same to get: almost $500 in some areas! **LAST MONTH:** 2

## 4 30 DAYS OF NIGHT #1 [2ND PR.]

**WRITER** Steve Niles
**ARTIST** Ben Templesmith

Even a second printing and the release of the signed, limited-edition trade paperback can't quash the heat surrounding this issue. And with the impending release of the sequel, *Dark Days*, scheduled for June, speculators will surely be keeping their eyes on this gem, as folks always wanna get the issues that kick-start a phenomenon. **LAST MONTH:** 3

## 5 Y–THE LAST MAN #1

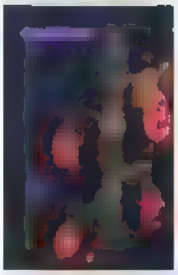
**WRITER:** Brian K. Vaughan
**ARTISTS:** Pia Guerra & José Marzan Jr.

The Last Man on Earth stars in one of the toughest comics on Earth to find! This series about a young man who must help repopulate the globe has hooked fanboys and casual readers alike, thanks to the high-concept premise. Throw in the buzz surrounding Vaughan and *Y* continues its death-grip on the Hot 10 list. **LAST MONTH:** 5

## 6 ULTIMATE WAR #1

**WRITER** Mark Millar
**ARTIST** Chris Bachalo

Who doesn't like seeing superteams smash each other to pieces? This issue continues that fine Marvel tradition when the Ultimate X-Men and the Ultimates clash over mutant politics. It doesn't hurt that *Ultimates* and *Ultimate X-Men* are also top sellers, as both of those titles got a boost from this kissing cousin. **LAST MONTH** 4



## 7 THE MATRIX [COMIC BOOK PREVIEW]

**WRITERS** Paul Chadwick, Larry & Andy Wachowski
**ARTISTS** Various

Hey, this is that crazy free comic Warner Bros. released only to theaters back in 1999, but then recalled it because of the comic's graphic content. You can get it now for around $10, but with "The Matrix Reloaded" currently blowing fanboys' minds, crazy demand has risen on this sucka. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

## 8 H-E-R-O #1

**WRITER.** Will Pfeifer
**ARTIST** Kano

This book shocked fans with its new take on the old Dial "H" for Hero concept from the 1970s (a.k.a. The Dark Ages) and got a huge boost when *Uber*-scribe and Pfeifer fan Geoff Johns offered a money-back guarantee if readers didn't like it. Retailers underordered, and naturally, demand is now high. There's a quick economics lesson for ya! **LAST MONTH:** 6

## 9 SMALLVILLE ONE-SHOT

**WRITERS:** Mark Verheiden & Clint Carpenter
**ARTISTS:** Kilian Plunkett & Mark Morales

Not issue #1 of the bimonthly ongoing: this is the one-shot that DC put out in September of 2002 which included two comic stories, interviews with cast members and exclusive photos. With the ongoing *Smallville* now out-selling the regular Superman books in some regions, fans are clamoring for the book that started it all. **LAST MONTH. N.R.**

## 10 WONDER WOMAN #190

**WRITER:** Walter Simonson
**ARTISTS** Jerry Ordway & P. Craig Russell

Not since Ken Russell chopped her locks on "Felicity" has a haircut caused such fervor! Wonder Woman's going with a tussled Sarah McLachlan 'do that suits her nicely, especially when rendered on the hot-ass cover by Adam Hughes. And to all you traditionalists out there groaning–it'll grow back! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

# making the GRADE

## GRADE TO ORDER

### CGC plans 'live' Signature Series books this summer

Quick: What could be better than Chef Emeril Lagasse's own personal recipe for stuffed tomatoes? Why, having that chubby psycho cooking that grub up right in front of your face, of course!

Such logic applies nicely to CGC's immediate plans to offer up a pseudo-live version of their popular Signature Series brand of books this summer. (CGC's Signature Yellow Label guarantees an autograph to be authentic.) Debuting at the WizardWorld Philadelphia convention held between May 30-June 1, fans will have a chance to procure signed and graded titles at several CGC-attended booths. And rather than having to choose between pre-selected titles that were autographed, slabbed off-site and then marketed via a retail outlet like Dynamic Forces, fans can bring CGC-supervised creators any book from their career that strikes their fancy.

"Say a creator does a signing at our table and signs a book," explained CGC Primary Grader Steve Borock. "That fan can either walk away with the signature, or hand it [directly over to us] and get it certified. We'll be able to authenticate the signature because there will be a CGC representative standing there." Books will be collected and then shipped to CGC's Sarasota, Fla. offices for a Signature Series Yellow Label and an "encapsulating" (sealing the book in a protective plastic casing). Whereas a retailer would be able to set a market price for an autograph, fans need only pay the price of the title plus the standard $24 grading fee for a modern (1975-present) book.

As in the sports collectibles industry, the opportunity to market phony signatures remains a danger to fans. "The problem with signatures is, if you look at the sports industry, so many of them are fake because there was no authentication early on," Borock said. "We're going to start the authentication now."

Obviously, there won't be an opportunity for fans to walk a convention floor, get a book signed, and then return to the CGC booth. "There's no witness," Borock said. "We don't know. Somebody could be in the back room with a magic marker, penciling 'Jim Lee' on something." Likewise, it wouldn't make sense for CGC to assign graders to walk the show floor and double-check signatures from any creators who just happen to attend the show.

Current plans call for CGC to assign representatives to the Top Cow booth, with Philly-attending Cow creators such as Marc Silvestri, *Witchblade* writer David Wohl and new *Magdalena* artist Eric Basaldua signing books for on-the-spot signature authentification.

Judging from an early enthusiastic response, Borock figured the Signature Series will have a presence at all upcoming WizardWorld conventions. The August 8-10 Chicago site in particular promises to have a healthy attendance by creators willing to have a CGC shadow.

So for those fans hoping to see a CGC-certified Silvestri autograph on issues of *Weird War*: Your ship has come in. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**

**CGC ON THE SCENE** CGC and Top Cow hope to hook up for live authentification at this summer's cons. That means copies of *Magdalena* could get the Signature Series treatment (inset).

# WIZARD GOES X-RATED!

You'd think we were standing in line for the ultimate peep show.

That's how excited a band of six Wizard staffers (and one former staffer!) were as we anxiously waited outside Manhattan's posh Beekman Theatre. The kind folks at 20th Century Fox had offered the editorial staff free passes to an advance screening of Bryan Singer's "X2," and for a group of comic geeks who drooled over the first X-flick and waited nearly three years for the sequel, this was a fanboy's dream come true.

**X2: LOSERS UNITED** Associate editors Jesse Thompson (emulating Pyro) and Josh Elder (emulating an umpire) strike a pose after the "X2" screening

So can you blame us for being just a bit excited?

"Anybody else curiously aroused?" asked Editorial Director Matt Senreich, as the other staffers started inching away.

Much like the weather conditions for our "Daredevil" screener, the temperatures were lower than Iceman's chances of shagging Rogue. But the arctic chill couldn't dampen our spirits. And the fact that the earlier screening let out late, forcing us to wait outside for an extra hour? That only added to our mounting anticipation. When we finally made it inside and the lights dimmed, we were just about ready to burst.

What followed was two hours of pure fanboy ecstasy, as we succumbed to the coolness of Nightcrawler, the savagery of Wolverine and the countless mutant cameos--not to mention the sight of Kelly Hu in tight black leather. "Mmmm...she can eviscerate me any day of the week," mumbled smitten Associate Editor Josh Elder.

And as we embarked on the walk of shame back home, one thing was for sure: It was *definitely* good for us.

## TAKING A WIZ

ALSO AVAILABLE

**ANIME INSIDER #8**

We'll give you the scoop on how to be a Spirit Detective like Yusuke Urameshi, star of Cartoon Network's latest hit, "Yu Yu Hakusho." Also, we rate every movie from "Spirited Away" director Hayao Miyazaki, the Steven Spielberg of Japan! And if you're itching for a road trip, we've got your Summer Fun Guide to all the hot anime and manga conventions!

**On sale June 18 in comic shops**
**On sale July 1 everywhere**

**INQUEST GAMER #99**

Our milestone 100th issue draws closer! This ish, we've got our Biggest *Magic* Issue of the Year, with complete descriptions of 6,391 cards! Also, look for our rundown of the Top 10 *Scourge* Cards, the latest Magic release, as well Expert-Level Strategy Guides for *Mech Warriors, Lord of the Rings, Yu-Gi-Oh!* and more!

**On sale June 4 in comic shops**
**On sale June 17 everywhere**

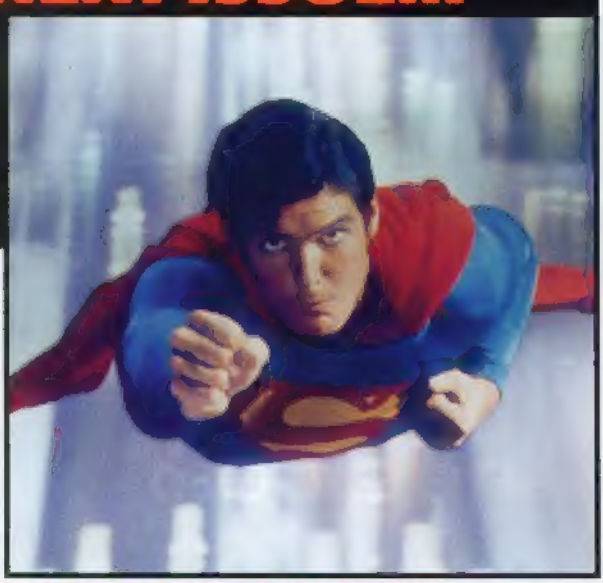
**TOYFARE #72**

All the latest and greatest toy news, plus another hilarious episode of TTT! We've also got a He-Man Episode Guide from the first season of the new Cartoon Network show for you, and a magnified look at the world of shrinking toys such as Kubricks and Stikfas. Size doesn't matter!

**On sale June 11 in comic shops**
**On sale June 24 everywhere**

## NEXT ISSUE...

A SNEAK PEEK



### TOP 50 COMIC MOVIES!

Where will your favorite comic-based movies fall on this list? Who should be No. 1--"Superman: The Movie," "Spider-Man," "X-Men" or "Batman"? How will new flicks like "Daredevil" and "X2" stack up? The fanboys will go nuts when *Wizard* selects and ranks the Top 50 Comic Movies Ever Made!

## NEXT MONTH IN WIZARD #143

### DR. DOOM COLLECTOR'S GUIDE!

What issues should you get if you wanna collect the greatest moments in Dr. Doom's long, illustrious career in villainy? Find out here, as we present this dastardly collector's guide to the best Doom moments ever published!

### PREVIEW PALOOZA!

We've got an eight-page sneak peek at J. Michael Straczynski and Gary Frank's *Supreme Power* from Marvel's MAX imprint, and if that weren't enough, we've got a six-page preview of *the* most anticipated project in comics in the last 20 years: *JLA/Avengers* by Kurt Busiek and George Pérez!

### REMEMBER THE TITANS!

Ultra-hot writer Geoff Johns has already helped revitalized *Flash, JSA* and *Hawkman*; can he do the same for *Teen Titans*? We've got a scouting report that forecasts the Titans' future under Johns' watch, as well an examination of all the characters and the franchise's storied (and sometimes underwhelming) history.

## WIZARD #143

**On sale June 25 in comic shops! On sale July 8 everywhere!**

# THE HOTSEAT

## This Month Featuring:

# ROB VAN DAM

**THE WWE SUPERSTAR WRESTLER AND WRITER OF THE UPCOMING *TWISTED PERCEPTION* COMIC BOOK**

**WIZARD: What's the deal with the long-rumored RVD comic book?**
Right now, it's being penciled. The plan is to release it as a four-issue series which tells the origin, and then the story goes on from there.
**And you're opening a comic store?**
I'm hoping to have RVD'S Five-Star Comics open at a mall out here in Los Angeles in June.
**Why open a comic store, since you're actually in shape and don't live in your mom's basement?**
I've been a huge fan of comic books since I was 7 years old when I got my first **Ghost Rider**. It's a passion that I've always had. I want to do everything I can, using my celebrity, to draw focus onto the comic book world.
**Kevin Smith owns a comic book store. Who'd win if you two fought?**
I could take **Jay and Silent Bob** on at the same time and kick their asses. And then take their stash.
**What are you currently reading?**
*100 Bullets* is probably the best thing I've read as of late. I like *Alias*. I like a lot of what Brian Michael Bendis does. I like his *Ultimate Spider-Man*.
**What comic book movie should you play the lead in?**
"Ghost Rider." Not saying I'm a better actor than Nicolas Cage, but I'd kick his ass, too.
**I was thinking *Groo*.**
Send me the script, I'll check it out.
**Who deserves a "Van Terminator" in real life?**
Right now it's the contractor who's renovating my house. As a matter of fact, interview me in a couple months and I might tell you how that "Van Terminator" went.
**Who had the best *Playboy* pictorial, Sable, Torrie or Chyna?**
The only one that I saw out of those was **Sable**. I don't read *Playboy* because it's too soft.
**I was sitting in the movie theater the other day and there were a bunch of punk high school kids sitting in the back row being really loud and throwing popcorn at people. I kept thinking, "What would Rob Van Dam do?"**
I would stand up in front of the movie screen so I had everybody's attention and I'd point at where the popcorn was being thrown and I'd say, "Watch it, ass---, you're coming close to pissing me off."
**You were in "Bloodmoon" with Frank Gorshin. Did you get to kick the Riddler's ass?**
I was about to one time. I played a dead zombie, I was late to catch a flight to an ECW match, and all they had to do was get a couple lines right and I was outta there. And Frank Gorshin and Chuck Jefferies went over and over and over this scene. They finally got it, I ran to the airport, and I actually flew on the airplane with all my makeup on as a zombie. So the **Riddler had it coming.**
**You're the man of a thousand nicknames, like "Mr. PPV," "Mr. Monday Night," "The Whole F'n Show"...so help me think of a nickname for myself.**
Have you thought about "The Whole F'n Interviewer"? That's all I know about you so far.
**I also like gardening.**
Okay. ■ **TOM ROOT**

Frank Gorshin/Riddler photo courtesy Everett Collection. Rob Van Dam photo © 2003 World Wrestling Entertainment. Sable photo © Steve Granitz/WireImage.com. Jay & Silent Bob © 2001 Miramax.

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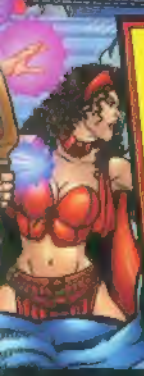

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